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ABSTRACT

These hearings on two bills to authorize the permanent establishment within the General Services Administration of a system of federal information centers were held on May 18 and June 23, 1978. The main purpose of these centers is to provide the public with information about the programs and procedures of the federal government. Statements were heard from managers of existing federal information centers, congressional representatives from Texas and California, an officer of the General Services Administration, an officer of the Office of Management and Budget, and others. An executive summary of the federal information center assessment, completed March 22, 1977 and submitted to the hearing record, summarizes the objectives and role of the center, an analysis of current center operations, options for expansion and upgrading, and recommended choices from these options. Other submissions to the hearing are a map of federal information center and tie-line city locations, memos regarding monitoring of telephone calls, and supporting statements from the General Services Administration and the Library of Congress. (SW)

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FEDERAL INFORMATION CENTERS

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HEARINGS

BEFORE A

SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

NINETY-FIFTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

ON

H.R. 12583 AND H.R. 12744

TO AUTHORIZE THE PERMANENT ESTABLISHMENT OF A SYSTEM OF FEDERAL INFORMATION CENTERS

MAY 18 AND JUNE 23, 1978

Printed for the use of the Committee on Government Operations

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FEDERAL INFORMATION CENTERS

THURSDAY, MAY 18, 1978

House of Representatives,
Government Activities and
Transportation Subcommittee
of the Committee on Government Operations,
Washington, D.C.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 10 a.m., in room 2247, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. John L. Burton (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Present: Representatives John L. Burton and Robert S. Walker.

Also present: Benjamin L. Palumbo, staff director; Miles Q. Romney, counsel; George E. Gudauskas, professional staff member; Bruce R. Butterworth, professional staff member; Cecelia Morton, clerk; and Rachel Halterman, minority professional staff, Committee on Government Operations.

Mr. Burton. The subcommittee will please be in order.

Our purpose today is to receive testimony and other information relating to H.R. 12583 and an identical bill, H.R. 12744, "To authorize the permanent establishment of a system of Federal Information Centers."

A citizen who needs some information about a Federal program or activity often has a hard time knowing where to start. For example, the telephone books for the District of Columbia, Maryland suburban, and northern Virginia areas, devote over eight pages to a maze of Federal Government listings. Fortunately, there is help at hand. Seven of those eight pages carry a box in the upper left-hand corner that reads: "Confused? Don't know which of these offices can help you? Call 755-8660—Federal Information Center."

About half our population can now make a toll-free call or visit to one of 38 Federal Information Centers.

In 1977 these centers received 8 million inquiries. They expect nearly 9 million in 1978.

The centers were begun in 1966 on a pilot basis. Each year, Congress has appropriated funds for a growing number of centers. The estimate for fiscal year 1979 is $4 million.

The appropriations have been reimbursed by equal contributions from the 17 Federal agencies to which most of the inquiries are referred. But the Federal Information Center program does not yet have permanent legislative authorization.

This legislation authorizes the Administrator of General Services to establish and regulate a nationwide network of Federal programs and procedures. It also authorizes the appropriation for fiscal year 1980 of $7 million to cover both the current level of activity and expansions. Necessary sums for each succeeding fiscal year are also authorized. It would release GSA from the reimbursement basis previously used for funding.

The bills before us are closely similar to the legislative language which the Administrator of General Services transmitted to the Speaker on March 23, 1978.

[The bills, H.R. 12583 and H.R. 12744, follow:]

95TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 12583

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MAY 4, 1978

Mr. JOHN L. BURTON (for himself, Mr. BROOKS, and Mr. HORTON) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Government Operations

---

A BILL

To authorize the permanent establishment of a system of Federal Information Centers.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That this Act may be cited as the "Federal Information Centers Act".

SEC. 2. Title I of the Federal Property and Administrative Services Act of 1949 is amended by adding at the end thereof the following new section:

"FEDERAL INFORMATION CENTERS

"SEC. 112. (a) The Administrator is authorized to establish within the General Services Administration a nationwide network of Federal Information Centers for the pur-

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pose of providing the public with information about the programs and procedures of the Federal Government and for other appropriate and related purposes.

"(b) The Administrator is authorized to prescribe such rules and regulations as may be necessary to the functioning of the Federal Information Centers.

"(c) There is hereby authorized to be appropriated $7,000,000 for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1980, and such sums as may be necessary for each succeeding fiscal year for carrying out the purposes of this section.".

95th CONGRESS
2d Session

H. R. 12744

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

May 17, 1978

Mr. John L. Burton (for himself, Mr. Brooks, Mr. Horton, Mr. Fascell, Mr. Erlenborn, Mr. Preyer, Mr. Harrington, Mr. Jenrette, Mr. Walker, and Mr. Stangeland) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Government Operations

---

A BILL

To authorize the permanent establishment of a system of Federal Information Centers.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That this Act may be cited as the "Federal Information Centers Act".

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wide network of Federal Information Centers for the purpose of providing the public with information about the programs and procedures of the Federal Government and for other appropriate and related purposes.

"(b) The Administrator is authorized to prescribe such rules and regulations as may be necessary to the functioning of the Federal Information Centers.

"(c) There is hereby authorized to be appropriated $7,000,000 for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1980, and such sums as may be necessary for each succeeding fiscal year for carrying out the purposes of this section.".

Mr. Burton. I am happy that Mr. Brooks and Mr. Horton, who cosponsored the bill with me, will themselves offer testimony here today. Other cosponsors are Messrs. Fascell, Erlenborn, Preyer, Harrington, Jenrette, Walker, and Stangeland.

It is good to have you with us, Mr. Brooks. We look forward to your testimony. Please proceed.

STATEMENT OF HON. JACK BROOKS, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF TEXAS, AND CHAIRMAN, COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

Mr. Brooks. I want to thank you very much, Chairman Burton, for this opportunity to appear today. I want to commend you for holding this hearing. I am a cosponsor with you of H.R. 12583, along with Mr. Horton of New York, and I am pleased to help start it on what I hope will be a smooth legislative road to enactment.

Frankly, I am surprised this legislation has been so long getting here. From the time President Johnson first proposed the establishment of Federal Information Centers in 1965, it was clear that it was a sound idea, and the successful operation of Centers in a number of our cities on a pilot basis has proved it. This service should be provided to all our citizens, and that is just what the General Services Administration is seeking authority to do with this bill.

There can be no doubt that this type of service is needed. Eight million inquiries were handled by the existing Centers last year and that number is expected to go to 9 million this year. Those are our constituents calling. They want help in dealing with this massive Federal Government, and I want to see that they get help. One of the Centers now operating is in Houston, near my district. It has a toll-free tieline to Austin and San Antonia. I would like to see that telephone service extended the other way into Beaumont and Port Arthur and Galveston, and that is the kind of additional service that this legislation is designed to bring about.

Last year, we enacted the Federal Program Information Act, which will make it easier for local communities and governments to find out what kind of Federal assistance programs are available to help them. H.R. 12583 will give the individuals living in those communities the help they need to find out how the Federal Government can help them solve their problems.

As proposed by the General Services Administration, the cost of this legislation will be modest—only about $3 million more than what the current program is costing during fiscal year 1980. That will permit adding 22 new Centers, beefing up the staffs at the existing Centers, and extending telephone coverage throughout the country. With about half the population having the advantage of this service now, it is a matter of simple justice and equity to see that the other half gets it as soon as possible.

Anything we can do to make the Government more responsive to the people of this country is well worth doing, and H.R. 12583 that you have introduced would do just that. I am pleased to be a cosponsor and speak in favor of it today. If there is anything else I can contribute to it I will be happy to try and do that.

Thank you.

Mr. BURTON. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

For your information, the Center in Houston in fiscal year 1972 ranked at No. 30 in the amount of inquiries received from constituents and in fiscal year 1977 they had moved up to No. 8 which shows that people in the area are aware of the service. If we can get it into Beaumont and southeast Texas I am sure that we will move into No. 1.

Mr. BROOKS. Thank you very much. They have a center in New Orleans. How is that doing? Do you know anything about it?

Mr. BURTON. We have had some inquiries on that. I was planning on going down to take a firsthand look at the facility to see how it is operating and how they work with the people of that area.

Mr. BROOKS. I would hope that you could because that would probably be a good example.

Mr. BURTON. New Orleans took Houston's place as No. 30.

Mr. Chairman, we thank you.

Mr. Horton?

STATEMENT OF HON. FRANK HORTON, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF NEW YORK, AND RANKING MINORITY MEMBER, COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

Mr. HORTON. Mr. Chairman, I want to thank you for the opportunity to testify before your subcommittee on the subject of H.R. 12583, a bill to authorize the permanent establishment of the Federal Information Centers. There are currently 38 Centers throughout the country within direct-dial or toll-free access of over half the U.S. population. The efficiency and success of these Centers is well documented, and I believe their permanent establishment is an action that is long overdue. It has been 12 years since the first pilot center was set up in Atlanta, Ga., and I am pleased to join with Chairman Burton and our distinguished full committee chairman, Mr. Brooks, in cosponsoring legislation to implement this program on a nationwide basis.

The subject of Government responsiveness to its citizens has been an active interest of mine for some time. Both in my congressional duties and as Chairman of the Commission on Federal Paperwork, I have worked toward improvement in Government efficiency, particularly as it relates to functions of service to the public. A government that is not responsive to the people it is designed to serve is a failure, and there is no question but that the size of our Government and its attendant bureaucratic processes has resulted in inefficiency and has created resentment on the part of the public. All my congressional colleagues have had numerous communications from constituents who are perplexed, frustrated, and angry over the ever-increasing encroachment of the Federal Government on their business and private lives. Insult is added to injury when their questions are met with bureaucratic arrogance and unresponsiveness.

During its 2-year existence, the Commission on Federal Paperwork delved into many aspects of Government inefficiency, as well as public reaction to its activities and requirements. In an effort to obtain firsthand knowledge of public sentinent, the Commission set up a "hot line" to field inquiries and complaints. Through this and various other means of contact, Commission ombudsmen reviewed comments, suggestions, problems and complaints involving the Federal Government and, in many instances, were able to affect improvements. I am particularly pleased to have an opportunity to speak on behalf of the Federal Information Centers, because their permanent establishment is one of the many recommendations that evolved from the studies of the Paperwork Commission.

We found that citizens are discouraged in their dealings with the Federal Government. Efforts to locate the appropriate agency are often met with incorrect referrals at the caller's expense or letters answered after the fact, if at all. Local access to a Federal Information Center can provide citizens with quick answers, appropriate agency referrals and efficient service. Witnesses to follow will describe additional benefits of the FIC program and enumerate its successes.

The Commission observed three basic reactions to the Federal Government: (1) The Government no longer understands it exists to serve the people; (2) bureaucratic politics and organizational development are given greater weight than responsiveness to the public interest and problems of individual citizens; and (3) communication between citizens and their government is in disarray: cooperative relationships, so vital to the Nation's well-being, break down.

The sentiments expressed above reveal an unfortunate indictment of our Government's abilities to respond to the needs of its citizenship. Examples of Commission findings include complaints that agencies had an average response time of over 21 calendar days, 40 percent of those contacted the Commission felt they had not been treated fairly, over half the citizens felt the particular agency they dealt with did not exert adequate effort in resolving their problems, nearly three-fourths of the citizens did not obtain a satisfactory resolution as a result of the agency's complaint-handling mechanism, and the impact of the agency's image was unsatisfactory in five of the seven agencies reviewed.

Mr. Chairman, I don't pretend to suggest that the Federal Information Centers provide the ultimate solution to the public's dissatisfaction in its dealings with the Federal Government; however, I believe that easy access to information about the Government is at least the first step toward reversing negative sentiment and improving public service. In our complex and increasingly interrelated society, the image of "big brother" seems unavoidable, but there is no reason why our citizens should have to go through myriad referrals to get simple answers to their questions and, what is worse, spend hours filling out forms which are often duplicative, if not totally unnecessary.

Providing all citizens with access to information about the Government is an important move toward easing the mistrust that presently exists between the private and public sectors, and I am optimistic about the possibilities of additional measures. I envision public service to include a program which further reduces paperwork and redtape. In the near future I intend to introduce legislation which implements some key recommendations of the Paperwork Commission. For example, I was most impressed with the potential of the ombudsman approach to citizen discontent with Government inefficiency. I plan to propose a program which would extend beyond the limitations of the Federal Information Centers in an effort to seek more enduring reforms. Ombudsmen would have the capabilities to monitor the effectiveness of agency complaint responses, improve feedback to Government agencies of burdens imposed by Federal regulatory requirements and paperwork, and identify areas where Government is unnecessarily complex. These activitites could serve as a complement to the Federal Information Centers by enhancing the capability for substantive reform. It is quite conceivable that the Centers could act as a bellwether in directing ombudsmen activities. Whereas the primary function of an Information Center is to respond to an individual inquiry, the function of an ombudsman in this instance is to work toward reform for the overall benefit of the public.

Mr. Chairman, I thank you again for the opportunity to express my support for H.R. 12583, and I urge the subcommittee to act favorably on this legislation as a first step toward more responsive government. I encourage the subcommittee members to seek additional means to improve Government efficiency and service. I can think of few ways in which we can better serve our constituencies. Thank you.

Mr. BURTON. Thank you very much. I have one question.

There is a center in Buffalo, N.Y., that has a tieline set up in Rochester, N.Y. Does that provide adequate services to your district?

Mr. HORTON. It would be better to have one in Rochester, but I realize that they have problems. Whether or not they can actually expand a facility for that, I do not know.

But we do have a relationship with the Buffalo office. That is working pretty well now; that is, from the information I have.

Mr. BURTON. Gentlemen, we thank you both very much for your testimony.

Our next witness is from the Office of Management and Budget, Mr. Wayne Granquist. He is accompanied by Mr. Vincent Puritano.

Gentlemen, we welcome you.

STATEMENT OF WAYNE G. GRANQUIST, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR FOR MANAGEMENT AND REGULATORY POLICY, OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET; ACCOMPANIED BY VINCENT PURITANO, DEPUTY ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR FOR INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS AND REGIONAL OPERATIONS

Mr. GRANQUIST. Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee, it is a pleasure to appear before you today to discuss H.R. 12583, a bill to establish the Federal Information Centers.

The proposed bill would authorize the establishment of a network of Federal Information Centers, to be administered by the General Services Administration. The proposed Centers would be based on the currently operated Centers which are now funded by 17 Federal agencies on a reimbursable basis.

The Federal Information Centers are located in 38 major metropolitan areas and are connected by toll-free tielines to an additional 41 cities. The Centers provide direct assistance for citizens with questions about Federal Government regulations, programs, and services. In fiscal year 1977, for instance, they answered more than 8 million inquiries.

The proposed legislation would establish a firm legislative base for the existing Centers, and provide a basis for future expansion if desired. The first Federal Information Center was established in 1966 on a pilot basis and was financed out of existing appropriations. Since then, as you know, the number of Centers has grown to 38. In our judgment, the pilot effort to test the feasibility of the Centers has proven itself, and the Centers now warrant separate legislative authority and appropriations.

Impetus for the proposed legislation stems in part from a study of the Federal Information Centers conducted by staff of OMB last year. In general, we found that the present Centers operate at a high degree of responsiveness to the substantial volume and diversity of questions they receive. The Centers receive about 600,000 inquiries per month, of which about 65 percent are telephones and the balance walk-in. The range of inquiry is extremely broad, and extends not only to Federal programs and services, but to State and local governments and private as well. Moreover, the quality of responses is surprisingly high, which in turn is attributable principally to the abilities of the information specialists employed.

However, we also found that the Centers could be improved through strengthened overall management, better information system design and support facilities, and possible expansion in population served.

Before major improvements in the present system are undertaken, however, the OMB study team concluded that specific legislative authorization and separate appropriations should be sought in order to assure adequate central control and central accountability for their operations.

It should be stressed that the Federal Information Centers are in no way intended to supplant the vast array of existing public information systems maintained by individual Federal agencies, such as the Veterans' Administration, Civil Service Commission, Internal Revenue Service, Social Security in HEW, and so forth. The FIC's operate primarily as a central source of referral to existing information systems, and attempt to answer direct inquiries only as a last resort, except for those of the most rudimentary kind.

In our study, we observed that the principal beneficiaries of the Centers appear to be those members of our society who are the least well informed and knowledgeable about the Federal Government, and therefore require some assistance in determining where to go to obtain an answer to their questions. However, virtually every segment of our society has access to the Centers.

Mr. Chairman, the study I referred to is an internal staff analysis which is not an official administration position, but I would be pleased to submit it for the record.

Mr. BURTON. Without objection, that will be made part of the record at this point.

[The analysis supplied is entitled "Federal Information Center Assessment," Intergovernmental Relations and Regional Operations Division, Office of Management and Budget, March 22, 1977. The title page, table of contents, and executive summary are printed below. The complete report of 115 pages plus attachments is available in the subcommittee file.]

FEDERAL INFORMATION CENTER ASSESSMENT

Intergovernmental Relations and Regional Operations Division
Office of Management and Budget

March 22, 1977

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
FEDERAL INFORMATION CENTER
ASSESSMENT REPORT

I. INTRODUCTION

Background

Eleven years ago in November 1965, President Johnson directed that the Federal Government expand its efforts to improve services to individual citizens including basic information about the Federal Government itself. The following year, the first pilot Federal Information Center was opened in Atlanta, Georgia. Since then, the number of Centers has increased to a total of 37 with toll-free telephone tieline service to an additional 40 cities. As a total network, the Center system now covers about 55% of the U.S. population on a local call basis.

Objectives of the Current Assessment

A brief assessment was requested to determine the feasibility of expanding the current network of 37 Federal Information Centers to a nationwide system as a means of making basic information about Federal programs and services more readily available to all citizens. In addition, consideration was to be given to the use of Centers as a vehicle for citizens to communicate their opinions and other concerns about the Federal Government directly to agency policy officials and the President.

The three major areas to be covered in the assessment report were:

- The overall effectiveness of current Centers' operations in responding to citizen needs for information about Federal programs and services;
- The desirability, feasibility, and cost of increasing the scope of information services, improving service quality, and expanding geographic coverage of Centers; and
- The desirability, feasibility, and cost of utilizing the Centers to facilitate more direct dialogue between citizens and agency policy officials and the President on policy issues, to improve Federal responsiveness to consumer interests, and to possibly create intergovernmental information centers.

Methodology

The methodology employed during the assessment consisted of:

- Analysis of Available Data on Center Operations which consisted of reports on the volume and type of inquiries received, staff workload, and other factors.

- Field Reviews of Center Operations included personal interviews with Center staff, General Services Administration supervisory personnel, Federal Executive Board Chairpersons, and officials from Federal agencies, State and local governments, and private organizations in 11 major Center cities throughout the country.

- Selected Interviews with a wide range of people to obtain viewpoints and reactions to various possibilities for expanding the scope and role of Federal Information Centers. These included private organizations specializing in informational and referral services such as the United Way, State officials including personnel responsible for the State "tieline" operations in Georgia and South Dakota respectively, and Federal agencies with major citizen inquiry and assistance programs such as the Internal Revenue Service.

Concept and Role of a Federal Information Center

In carrying out this review, it was necessary to make some basic assumptions about the nature and overall purposes of the Federal Information Centers as a benchmark for assessing their current effectiveness and developing options for possible future expansion. The key assumptions were:

- First, the Centers operate as a part of a much larger, and diversified network of information programs devoted to providing information to our estimated 215 million citizens on services available to them. This system includes a score of other major Federal information services as well as numerous State, local, and private systems.

  In recognition of this diversity, the assessment team gave particular attention to the degree of coordination between Federal Information Centers and related information and referral systems administered by other Federal agencies, State and local governments, and private agencies.

- Second, the assumption was made that most information service organizations enjoy a "comparative advantage" in having easier access to detailed information on certain types of programs, services, or agencies. While a Federal Information Center can usually provide general information on available State, local government, and private agency services in its area of jurisdiction, it has a particular advantage and responsibility in providing detailed information on Federal activities. In developing options for expansion, considerable emphasis was given to increasing the capacity of Federal Information Centers to supply information on the Federal sector as their first and most important priority.

- Third, in assessing opportunities to utilize the Federal Information Centers more extensively for facilitating citizen participation in the Federal decisionmaking process, the review team was conscious of the danger of creating unrealistic expectations concerning the ability of Centers to respond to and resolve the diverse range of personal as well as governmental problems which citizens might bring to their attention.
- Finally, the role of the Centers as the first and perhaps the only direct point of contact which many citizens may have with the Federal Government was viewed as an important consideration in developing various alternatives. While communications technology allows for great efficiencies in storing and processing information, an assumption was made that the Centers should continue to emphasize a personalized approach in dealing with citizens as their basic and most responsive mode of operation.

II. ANALYSIS OF CURRENT CENTER OPERATIONS

Overall, the assessment team was very favorably impressed by the quality and cost-effectiveness of information services provided by the Centers. For the purposes of the Executive Summary, only those findings which were considered particularly significant will be described.

General Background

The Centers operate under the policy direction of the General Services Administration and its Office of Public Affairs.

The Fiscal Year 1977 budget for Federal Information Centers is $2,858 million, funded on a reimbursable basis by 17 Federal agencies at $168,000 each.

Allocation of funds is heavily directed to staff support--79% for salaries and related expenses. Resources are also heavily concentrated in Center operations as compared to national support.

Out of a total of 140 budgeted positions, 136 are allocated to direct Center operations. Staffing is fairly evenly distributed among Centers. Most Centers range in size from two to five full-time positions; three Centers exceed that level.

There are presently a total of 37 Centers in operation, with one more scheduled to open in the spring of 1977. Sixteen Centers also provide toll-free telephone service to one or more tieline cities, and cover a total of 40 additional cities.

Assessment of Operational Capabilities

The Centers receive about 600,000 inquiries per month in aggregate, of which about 65% are telephone and the balance walk-in. A negligible number of inquiries are received through the mail.

The range of inquiry by subject matter is broad and diverse and a very few areas dominate. Four agencies which also maintain substantial public information and referral systems of their own account for over 25% of Center inquiries: (1) Internal Revenue Service (9.2%); (2) Civil Service Commission (8.0%), (3) Social Security Administration (4.8%); and (4) Veterans Administration (4.4%). Questions related to these agencies are similar to those handled by their own information services--e.g., tax information, Federal employment, social security, and veterans assistance eligibility. Distribution of calls among Federal agencies is otherwise spread fairly evenly over the range of Federal programs and services. Very few discrete organizations beyond those mentioned above account for greater than 1% of inquiries.

The relative volume of public inquiries varies widely among individual Centers--from a low of about 5,000 per month to a high of 52,000 which include walk-in totals. A number of interrelated factors appear to account for this disparity. For instance, location of a Center in the lobby generates substantial walk-in volumes. The relative concentration of Federal programs and services in a particular city is also a factor. However, the level of publicity is generally believed to have the most substantial impact on the volume of inquiries which a Center receives, although the actual dimensions are not clear since no data was available to precisely measure the effects of publicity on inquiry volume.

All Centers' information files are manual. No computer or other automatic or mechanical updating systems are utilized. The sources of information maintained consists primarily of information showing location and telephone number of agencies (State, local government, and private as well as Federal), usually organized by functional areas of service. Each Center maintains such information for national, regional, State and local levels of each agency, and each Center is individually responsible for updating its basic file.

Telecommunications equipment currently available is relatively unsophisticated. Few Centers have a capability to transfer incoming calls to an appropriate Federal agency, either within the city in which the Center is located or to another area. Other telecommunication support systems are also modest. Only 12 Centers currently operate with a pre-recorded message and automatic hold capacity to accommodate incoming calls when the rest of the Center staff is busy.

Overall Analysis of Strengths and Weaknesses

The Centers' principal strengths start with a high degree of responsiveness to the substantial volume and wide diversity of questions they receive. This capacity is largely dependent on the abilities of the information specialists employed, who were perceived to be highly competent in terms of dealing with the public, generally knowledgable of government programs and services, and resourceful in seeking answers to complex questions and problems.

Responses are not confined to simply referring the questioner to an appropriate source for an answer. All Centers respond to substantive questions directly and conduct necessary research to the extent that they are able. Moreover, the informational services provided are not restricted to questions related to Federal programs and services. All Centers receive and maintain a capacity to respond to a significant volume of inquiries related to State, local, and private services available in the community.

The principal weaknesses of the system are in three general areas: overall management; information system design and support facilities; and limitations on the population served.

In terms of overall management, the Centers operate largely independent of one another with little management or policy direction and support from Washington. As a result, the quality of management in individual Centers is highly variable, as reflected in varying procedures on data file structure and maintenance, staff training, and knowledge of alternative information services and sources in the community.

Routine flow of information to Centers from individual Federal agencies, both nationally and regionally, is especially weak. Each Center is individually responsible for updating its own information files, including national and regional data common to all.

There is also a high degree of variation among Centers in terms of inquiry volumes for given levels of staff and population served. These variables directly affect their ability to respond adequately to substantive inquiries, handle peak workloads, and develop/update information sources.

Approximately 45% of the population is effectively precluded from full access to informational services by virtue of the limited extension of toll-free telephone service to only 40 tieline cities.

III. MAJOR OPTIONS FOR EXPANSION AND UPGRADING OF CENTERS

Based on the team's assessment of current Center operations and opportunities for improvements, the following basic alternatives were developed.

- Alternative One consists of a strategy of upgrading the effectiveness of the existing 37 Center network as a desirable management initiative on its own merits, as well as laying the foundation for possible expansion of the system's coverage, service level, and roles as outlined in Alternatives Two and Three. The report presents two major options for consideration, dealing with overall improvements in management support, and adjusting for workload imbalances respectively.
- Alternative Two covers various options for expanding Center coverage to all citizens on a toll-free basis, as well as supportive options for upgrading of communications equipment, data processing facilities, and the scope of informational services offered. Although any of the latter options could be implemented without necessarily expanding Center coverage, it is more likely they would be undertaken as part of a major upgrading and expansion program.
- Alternative Three modifies in a significant manner the basic role and functions of Federal Information Centers. The three specific options are: converting the Centers to a broader intergovernmental information source in cooperation with participating States and/or localities; using the Centers as part of a two-way communication link between citizens and Washington; and using the Centers to improve Federal responsiveness in consumer affairs.

Attachments A-1 and A-2 portray the above alternatives in summary form, provide cost estimates for each, and describe a recommended package for the overall expansion of the Federal Information Center network. However, it is important to note that total costs continue to be primarily for personnel and related expenses and that most of the estimates are driven by three basic factors: (1) total population served; (2) average volume of inquiries per 100,000 population; and (3) estimates of the number of inquiries an average Center staff member can handle per day. Although the assessment did generate some additional data on these three factors, much more reliable estimating techniques and data are still needed. For this reason, the assessment team urges considerable caution in the selection and sequence of implementing the individual options recommended.

A. Upgrade Quality of Services in Existing 37 Centers

The quality of services provided by the existing 37 Federal Information Centers is generally high for the level and scope of service contemplated. However, the assessment team noted substantial variations in quality, reflective of wide differences in management and operations, and overall levels and allocation of resources. The following options are intended to upgrade quality of services provided by the existing 37 Centers, assuming no change in population coverage.

Option A.1 - Improve Quality of Service in the Existing 37 Center Network through Modest Management Improvements

The quality of management systems varies significantly among individual Centers, and certain minimal management support functions are not performed at all.

A substantial number of these recommendations can be implemented within existing Center resources, and GSA has already initiated steps to implement many of them. These include transferring Centers located in the lobby of Federal buildings to off-lobby locations, development of standardized policy directives governing Center operations, more formal training for new staff, installing more efficient data filing and updating procedures, and providing for more routine updating of common information.

A number of management improvements considered essential for efficient Center operations will entail modest additional resources. These include measures to allow Center managers to devote time to organizing and managing Center operations, modest upgrading in facilities and equipment, and strengthening national office management and policy direction capability.

The total cost of these actions are estimated at $805,000 including 37 additional full-time positions and modest upgrading in facilities and equipment.

Option A.2 - Further Upgrade Quality of Service by Adjusting for Major Staffing Imbalances and Improve Response Capabilities in Existing 37 Center Network

The volume of inquiries received varies substantially among Centers, in absolute terms, and in relation to current staffing levels. Moreover, the range in inquiry volume does not appear to relate to differences in levels of population served, probably because of differences in the extent of publicity.

The assessment team proposes that existing staffing levels be augmented in the high volume Centers in order to maintain no greater than 125 telephone calls per staff member per day. Additional publicity should be considered in areas with relatively low volumes of inquiry and staffing should be adjusted accordingly.

The combined effect of these actions would involve an additional 81 full-time information specialists positions, at a total cost of $950,000.

As part of an overall objective to upgrade the quality of response provided by the Centers, the assessment team has concluded that individual Centers must have access to a considerably greater amount of information on programs and issues than presently. A number of procedural changes are recommended designed to generate a more routine flow of information from individual Federal departments and agencies on issues of general interest to the public.

These actions will depend principally on national policy and procedural decisions, but will also require modest increases in the GSA national office staff. A total of five positions at a cost of $80,000 is proposed which combined with augmentation in Center staffing, entails a total cost for Option A.2 of $1.03 million.

Recommendation

The OMB assessment team recommends approval of each of the options discussed: Option A.1 ($.81 million), and A.2 ($1.03 million).

B. Expand Population Coverage.

The assessment team perceives no rational basis for restricting coverage of Federal Information Center's services to the present 55% of the population. Three alternative, mutually exclusive options are considered for expanding coverage to 100% of the population.

Option B.1 Expand Coverage of the Centers to the Entire Country on a Toll-Free Basis from the Existing 37 Center Network

Under this option, toll-free telephone lines would be extended to the entire population, from the existing 37 Centers, and additional staff would be added to handle the increased volume of calls.

This option has the principal benefit of building on the existing system and could therefore be implemented most expeditiously and with least disruption.

A significant potential problem is degradation in the relative quality of informational services provided to citizens in outlying areas. Existing Centers now provide more comprehensive information on inquiries generated in FIC cities, as compared to tieline cities. These disparities are likely to be even greater for outlying rural areas, particularly with respect to information on locally based programs and services.

This option would entail a total additional cost of $3.6 million covering staff increases and toll-free telephone lines to all parts of the country.

Option B.2 Expand Coverage with at Least One Center per State

Under this option, all existing 37 Centers would remain in operation. However, an additional 23 Centers would be opened, one in the largest metropolitan area of those States in which no Centers exist now.

The principal advantage of this option is that it would tend to offset the relative degradation in quality of responsiveness to outlying areas cited in Option B.1 by placing the Centers closer to the populations served. It would also facilitate development of relationships with State governments for exchange of information, and establishes the basis for moving toward the government information center model, where desired.

In terms of cost, this option is not materially more expensive than Option B.1 ($3.67 million compared to $3.60 million) largely because long distance telecommunications line costs on an intra-State basis are substantially less than inter-State. This helps offset the costs of added staff.

Option B.3 Expand Coverage to Entire Population but Consolidate to 10 Regional Centers

This option contemplates operating information services from 10 consolidated Centers, probably located in each of the 10 standard Federal regional cities. The remaining Centers would be closed.

Of necessity, a 10-Center model would experience much greater difficulty in maintaining information on the hundreds of cities and towns in each region and would be forced to rely on national or regional sources primarily, and possibly State governments. The more individualized approach with citizens presently employed in most Centers and which constitute one of their strengths, probably would be compromised as well. In the view of the assessment team, the quality of informational services provided by this model would be significantly below that of the others. Moreover, reducing the number of individual Centers might be perceived by the public as a retrenchment in information services offered, and congressional support might be weakened as well.

In terms of cost, and perhaps contrary to expectations, this option would be relatively expensive--about $4.49 million compared to approximately $3.6 million for Options B.1 and B.2. These higher costs result principally from relatively high inter-State telephone communications charges relative to intra-State charges, and these costs more than offset savings realized from staff savings associated with economies of scale.

Recommendation

The OMB assessment team recommends approval of Option B.2 at an annual cost of $3.67 million.

C. Improve Quality of Service Under an Expanded Coverage Model

If the geographic coverage of informational services is expanded as outlined under any of the three preceding options, substantial strain will be placed on Federal Information Centers' ability to provide adequate informational services for the added populations. The following outlines three options to enhance their response capability for this purpose:

C.1. Improve Quality of Service by Expanding Scope of Informational Services Provided

Under the present system, primary reliance is placed on individual Centers to develop and maintain their basic information file, including routine updating of basic data and researching information for unique or unanticipated questions. A number of the options discussed previously contemplate improving procedures for identifying relevant information on a more systematic basis and making it available to Centers. However, if toll-free telephone services are extended to the entire population, additional steps should be taken to develop information on programs and services in areas to which services are extended.

In developing a capacity to develop information covering a wide geographic area, a basic policy determination must be made concerning the nature of informational services to be provided. Although the Centers are presently designed primarily to answer questions concerning the Federal Government, they cover State and local services as well. As services are expanded geographically, the ability of Centers to provide information on local programs and services will be considerably less.

The assessment team recommends that as a matter of policy, first priority be accorded to developing a response capability on Federal programs and services located in the geographic area served. As a second priority, they should attempt to develop State-based information, in cooperation with existing State information and referral services, if possible. Centers would attempt to maintain a limited amount of local information, such as telephone directories for the larger communities served, but publicity should be carefully programmed to avoid the implication that detailed local information is available.

Under this approach, additional efforts should be made to develop comprehensive, area-wide information on available Federal programs and services, and develop necessary contacts and research to assemble appropriate State and local information.

The assessment team recommends that one additional staff position be allotted to each GSA regional office for the above purpose. This would include responsibilities for identifying the information needs of other Centers in the region, and assuring such information is compiled and updated on a continuing basis and made available to the Centers in a timely and useful manner. The cost of this option is estimated at $175,000.

C.2 Improve Quality of Service Through Data Processing Support

The volume and routine nature of a substantial part of the information utilized by Centers suggests that consideration should be given use of computer capability for storage and retrieval of at least portions of the Center data file.

The OMB assessment team concluded that while computer support has considerable intuitive appeal, there was insufficient evidence available to support system-wide application of such a capability at this time.

Although a substantial amount of information utilized by the Centers is relatively routine in nature, it covers highly diverse subject matter, and updating the basic information would be a constant and demanding process. Moreover, a substantial number of questions require individualized research and probing to obtain an adequate answer.

If a decision were made to develop a computer system support capability for the Centers under an expanded population model, as outlined under Option B, the added costs are estimated at approximately $1.2 million plus initial startup costs of $450-750 thousand. These estimates are based on a 10-Center model and would increase 5-10% if the 37 or 60 Center models were adopted.

In view of the complexity of information needs, the uncertainties regarding the cost-effectiveness of computer support, and the relatively high costs of a nationwide system, the OMB assessment team recommends that further experiments be conducted with a prototype system rather than installing a computer capability on a system-wide basis at this time. The cost of a four-month test using commercial time-sharing facilities in support of a sample of Centers is estimated at $158,000.

C.3 Improve Quality of Service by Adding Capacity to Directly "Bridge" Callers to Service Agencies

This option contemplates installing the capacity for Centers to bridge incoming telephone calls to an appropriate agency in order to assure a more adequate response to citizens' questions.

In reviewing this option, the assessment team reviewed existing State information systems currently in operation which employ this capacity--notably the States of Georgia and South Dakota tielines. Each operation was found to exhibit notable differences from current or contemplated Federal Information Center operations--particularly the extent of service provided individual callers. As a result of the highly detailed response given callers by the Georgia tieline, the overall average cost per telephone call is about $10 compared to $0.40 presently for Federal Centers. The South Dakota model, which provides less in-depth case-work assistance to callers than the Georgia tieline, operates at an average cost of $2.58 per call. Not all of these cost differentials are attributable to the call "bridging" capability, but that capacity is integrally related to the more in-depth response provided by these other models.

No accurate basis exists on which to estimate the additional cost of installing a call "bridge" capability in Federal Centers largely because proportion of calls to be bridged and extent of time spent on each are critical unknown variables.

The assessment team recommends that call "bridge" capability not be installed at this time for long distance calls. Instead, capacity for transferring calls within the local area should be added to all Centers now, and this experience should be used to gain more experience and data for estimating the need and costs of adding more complete coverage and service of this type.

D. Expand Role of Centers to Serve as Combined Federal Information Centers

The assessment included an examination of the Government Information Center in San Diego as a possible model for use elsewhere. The results confirmed that the quality and convenience of service under a combined approach with other levels of government was clearly advantageous to citizens. However, the volume of inquiries which a combined Center must be prepared to handle may run as much as 50% higher than a Federal Center, and staffing/financing arrangements for a joint Center can be potentially troublesome.

The rationale for selection of Option B.2 which would establish a Center in each State recognizes the desirability of moving toward an intergovernmental approach to providing information services. However, this model is dependent on closer day-to-day cooperation and joint planning among Federal, State, and local governments, and can only be implemented as cooperative agreements are developed among participating units of government.

Recommendation

The OMB assessment team recommends a further expansion of the San Diego pilot Center to a State-wide effort in cooperation with the State of California to develop further experience with this model. The Federal cost of this proposal is estimated at $160,000.

E. Expand Role of Federal Information Centers to Include Processing Citizen Viewpoints on Policy Issues, and Handling Consumer Complaints and Inputs

Options E. 1 and E.2 involve a fundamental change in the basic nature of the Centers. Both require the capacity to receive, analyze, and disseminate feedback from citizens. This role places the Centers in a much more sensitive public role which could adversely affect their normal function of providing information and referral services. Reservations were also voiced about the consumer complaint role, particularly with respect to having the Center perceived as an enforcement agency on behalf of citizens vis a vis Federal agencies. In both cases, it might be extremely difficult to drop these roles once citizens begin to utilize the Centers for such purposes.

At the same time, the assessment team found support for testing both roles provided this could be done under a carefully planned and controlled strategy which would avoid jeopardizing the effectiveness of the Center information and referral activities. This would require a decentralized approach in installing such capabilities in each Center to assure adequate flexibility.

Recommendation

The assessment team recommends the Centers start with a low-key reactive role with a modest increase in staff to compensate for the workload that additional inquiries and viewpoints would generate. This is estimated at $650,000 which supports one additional staff member in all existing Centers. A similar approach is recommended for Option E.2 - a minimum upgraded capacity to refer consumer complaints to appropriate agencies, disseminate information, etc. This option would not entail any additional costs over and above the basic manpower improvements over staff increases recommended under A.1 and A.2.

Both the options should be implemented after the basic management improvements (Option A.1 and A.2) and initial expansion of geographic coverage (Option B.2) have been fully implemented. Option E.1 for 60 Centers would cost $1.11 million.

IV. BASIC CONSIDERATIONS IN EXPANDING THE NUMBER AND SCOPE OF RESPONSIBILITIES FOR FEDERAL INFORMATION CENTERS

The following basic considerations should be taken into account in planning for and expanding the scope of responsibilities for Federal Information Centers.

- National publicity on the expansion of FICs should be avoided until basic management improvement and staffing increases have been accomplished to handle increased volume of inquiries.
- An explicit legislative basis should exist or be developed for the contemplated expansion of responsibilities.

- Appropriate consultation should be held with Congress, particularly in reference to authorization and appropriation requests contemplated.
- Systematic consultation should be carried out with appropriate Federal agencies, State and local governments, and private agencies in planning for the establishment of new Centers to maximize opportunities for mutual support.
- Implementation of each recommendation should commence as quickly as possible, but on a time-phased basis tailored to the complexity, degree of difficulty, and cost of each.

The following outlines a suggested timeframe and sequence for implementation of the report's recommendations.

A. Actions to upgrade the quality of services of the existing 37 Center network contemplated by Options A.1 and A.2 should begin now, without awaiting passage of legislative authority or separate appropriations.

B. GSA should begin immediately to carry out the necessary analysis, planning, and negotiations to implement the full range of recommended actions, including:

- Plans for expanding and upgrading Center operations beyond those reflected in Options A.1 and A.2; and negotiations and plans to implement the limited pilots and test experiments proposed under Option C.2 (computerization of the data file in one Center), Option C.3 (installation of limited telephone call bridging capacity), and Option D (develop government-wide Centers in California).

C. On the basis of the initial planning and analysis carried out in the above, initial steps to implement all or selected elements of major expansion options should commence by October 1, 1977.

- With respect to expansion of coverage to 100% of the population (Option B.2), first priority should be on extension of toll-free telephone lines and services out of the existing 37 Centers.
- Initial steps to upgrade the quality of information made available to Centers on a regular, recurring basis (Option C.2) should begin.

D. Implementation of Option E.1, for expanded citizen participation should not commence until substantial upgrading in FICs' response capability has been effected. A target date of January 1978, should be adopted to install the more limited, reactive citizen participation model.

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Attachment A-3

SUMMARY TABLE

Recommendations for Expansion of Federal Information Centers (Estimated Costs in $Millions)

Option Description	Estimated Costs	Possible Combinations	Recommendations	Incremental Increases	Cumulative Totals
I. Current Status Maintain existing network of 37 Federal Information Centers without major change	3.06	BASE	CURRENT STATUS (BASE)		$3.06
II. Options for Coverage/ Quality A.1 Upgrade quality of service in existing 37 Center network through minor operational improvements	0.01	ANY COMBINATION OF BASE + A.1 & A.2 POSSIBLE	A.1	$0.01	
A.2 Further upgrade quality of service by adjusting for major staff imbalances and improve response capabilities within existing 37 Center network	1.63		A.2 SUB-TOTAL	1.63 $1.64	$4.70
B.1 Expand coverage of Centers to entire country on toll-free basis from existing 37 Center network	3.60	ONLY ONE OF B.1, B.2, OR B.3 POSSIBLE ALL ASSUME A.1 & A.2 BEING DONE			
B.2 Expand coverage to entire country with at least one Center per State	3.67		B.2	$3.67	$8.37
B.3 Expand coverage to entire country but consolidate to ten regional Centers	4.40				
C.1 Improve quality of service by expanding scope of informational services provided.	0.18	ANY COMBINATION OF C COULD BE ADDED TO B.1, B.2, OR B.3 ONLY	C.1	$0.18	
C.2 Improve quality of service through major upgrading of telecommunications and data processing support	0 - 1.39		C.2 (EXPERIMENT ONLY)	0.16	
C.3 Improve quality of service by adding capacity to directly "bridge" callers to service agencies	NOT ESTIMATED		C.3 (LOCAL EXPERIMENT) SUB-TOTAL	0 $0.34	$8.71
III. Options for Expanded Role D. Expand role of Federal Centers to serve as combined Government Information Centers (GIC) with cooperating States and localities	0 - 1.63	CAN BE ADDED TO ANY COMBINATION OF A, B, OR C	D (CALIFORNIA STATEWIDE EXPERIMENT)	$0.16	
E.1 Expand role of Federal Centers to include processing of citizen viewpoints on national policies	0.05 - 4.40		E.1 (MODEL I, REACTIVE ONLY 40 CENTERS)	1.11	
E.2 Expand role of Federal Centers to facilitate handling of consumer complaints/inquiries regarding Federal agency performance and policies	0 - 1.65		E.2 (ADVISORY COORDINATION) SUB-TOTAL	0 $1.27	
			TOTAL RECOMMENDATIONS		$9.98

Mr. **Burton**. Would you have time for a few brief questions?

Mr. **Granquist**. Certainly.

Mr. **Burton**. The bill now calls for $7 million to be authorized for fiscal year 1980. I assume this figure has OMB approval?

Mr. **Granquist**. As an authorization figure, yes. But as an appropriation figure, we would go through our usual budget processes.

Mr. **Burton**. Yes. The operating cost of the FIC's for fiscal 1977 were about $2.9 million. Do you know what the estimated costs for 1978 and 1979 would be?

Mr. **Granquist**. I do not. My recollection is that they are about $3.8 million. I am informed that they are about $3.8 million.

Mr. **Burton**. The assumptions for the $7 million figure—how were they arrived at as far as specific expansion enhancements and improvements are concerned?

Mr. **Granquist**. The $7 million figure, Mr. Chairman, basically gave us room to improve in ways that are not specifically defined yet. We do not want to limit ourselves to the existing operations.

Mr. **Burton**. For approval and expansion in other areas?

Mr. **Granquist**. That is right. We have tieline expansion and staff training, and those things could be expanded in that way.

Mr. **Burton**. As for the March 22, 1977, report entitled "Federal Information Center Assessment," how did that get started?

Mr. **Puritano**. We were asked by White House staff to do an analysis of the existing Federal Information Centers around the country based on a number of complaints that the public is bewildered by the number of Federal programs, that they need more information to find out about Federal programs.

The one general type of information centers across the country were the GSA Federal Information Centers. So the obvious option that the White House staff asked us about was whether or not we could take a look at them and see if they were really working—and if they were working, could we come up with any ideas on how to expand them?

They wanted to do it in a hurry, so we did a quick 30-day review and took a look at about a half dozen centers around the country. Based on that staff assessment, we found a very effective institution.

We thought that the funding base was probably inadequate and it was done on a pass-the-hat basis among 17 agencies, and one of the first things we thought was that this ought to be on a permanent basis, and obviously Congress ought to take a look at it and either agree or disagree, and then we could talk about the specifics of how to expand it. We came up with about 11 or 12 options of how you can strengthen and expand it including tielines, moving to different States, getting more equipment, and in sum our study found a pretty effective instrument out there to do the job it is supposed to do.

Mr. **Granquist**. You must recognize how pleased we are from OMB to be in favor of something like this?

Mr. **Burton**. We are glad to have OMB here to speak in favor of this. The OMB report, as I understand it, recommends the addition of some 23 centers. Is that right?

Mr. **Puritano**. Yes; one of our options was to extend it to the other States so that every State gets covered.

Again, that is a staff recommendation and we would expect that if the authorizing legislation is approved that GSA would come up with detailed plans for expansion which OMB would go through its normal fiscal year 1980 budget review and then we could discuss the details of expansion.

Mr. **Burton.** The report, as I understand it, recommends that the authorizations be appropriated to GSA without them having to be reimbursed by the other agencies. Is that right?

Mr. **Granquist.** Yes; that is the main purpose of the bill—to get it out of the reimbursement category.

Mr. **Puritano.** It also gives accountability to one agency and responsibility.

Mr. **Burton.** Right. I assume then that the other agencies would be relieved at this reimbursement authority and their budgets may be reduced accordingly?

Mr. **Granquist.** That would be our intention; yes.

Mr. **Puritano.** Although they may decide to put extra money into their own Information Centers.

As you know, the Internal Revenue Service, the Civil Service Commission, HEW Social Security Centers, and the Veterans' Administration handle about 25 percent of the requests that come into the Federal Information Centers. They get referred to those agencies which then have to answer in more detail the specific questions of the public, and they get about 100 million requests for information a year.

Mr. **Burton.** From the complaints I get from my constituents, Social Security is a little bit lax in providing information and assistance.

I have no further questions. There are no questions from staff. We thank you both very much for coming. Mr. Griffin, we will have you next.

STATEMENT OF ROBERT T. GRIFFIN, DEPUTY ADMINISTRATOR OF GENERAL SERVICES, GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION; ACCOMPANIED BY ROBERT J. IRELAND, DIRECTOR OF SPECIAL SERVICES, OFFICE OF THE ADMINISTRATOR; AND LINDA S. SUTCLIFFE, FEDERAL INFORMATION SPECIALIST

Mr. **Griffin.** Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee, it is a pleasure to appear before you today to discuss H.R. 12583, a bill to establish the Federal Information Centers.

The bill would authorize the Administrator of General Services to establish within the General Services Administration an expanded network of Federal Information Centers, for the purpose of responding to questions from the public or referring to appropriate agencies inquiries on the rules, programs, and services of the Federal Government. Such authorization would permit the Administrator to establish the Federal Information Centers as a permanent program.

The Federal Information Center program began with the opening of the first FIC in 1966 in Atlanta, Ga. The number of Centers has grown to the present 38, while operating costs continue to be shared equally by 17 Federal agencies.

Toll-free telephone tielines have been made available to the citizens of 47 highly populated areas in close proximity to Federal Information Center cities. In fiscal year 1977, these FIC's handled over 8 million telephone and walk-in inquiries from citizens in need of assistance or concerned with the functionings of Government. We are considering means of expanding this service.

The mission of the FIC's is to respond to or refer to various sources inquiries from the general public on policies, programs, and services provided by the Federal Government. They are, so to speak, "where-to-turn" Centers. Without specialized assistance of the type available from FIC's, the size and complexity of the Federal Government and its many programs makes it extremely difficult for the average citizen to get accurate and timely responses to Government-related questions.

The questions we receive range from questions requiring a simple response, or direction such as, "How can I get a social security card?", to questions requiring extensive research and a complex answer such as "Does the Government have any information on how the noise and automotive pollution of a freeway proposed to run next to the Detroit zoo would affect the zoo animals?"

Mr. Chairman, there were 8 million inquiries last year. We would be happy to give you other examples if they would be helpful to you and the subcommittee.

The FIC program has also been involved in a number of experiments which attempt to improve citizen access to the Government.

An example is the "blue pages" project. Through assistance from the American Telephone & Telegraph Corp., selected Bell System telephone companies have agreed to test the feasibility of establishing "blue pages" as an adjunct to white and yellow pages in telephone books for the cities of Sacramento, Little Rock, Chicago, and Boston. The new blue pages would bring together in one section both organizational and subject listings of Government at the Federal, State, and local levels, as well as all listings of nonprofit organizations which provide public services.

Since 1972, an experimental Federal-State-local Government Information Center has been functioning in San Diego, Calif. The Government Information Center has been testing procedures for centralizing research and referral services for all levels of Government in one jointly funded facility. Currently, we are also studying the feasibility of handling citizen complaints about executive branch activities.

We would hope to seek a direct appropriation for the program in 1980. We are considering various alternatives for enhancing the program.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my prepared statement. I will be happy to respond to any questions you or the other members of the subcommittee might have.

Mr. BURTON. Thank you very much. Do you have any idea why Boston is always consistently in the top category of inquiries each year?

Mr. GRIFFIN. It is because of a high level of intelligency and search for knowledge, and because of the great number of students who just flock to Boston. But other than that, I really cannot say.

Mr. BURTON. Maybe they want to know what happened to the Celtics and they do not know.

Mr. GRIFFIN. That is age. It happens to all of us.

Mr. BURTON. The Congressional Budget Office has discussed the matter of future planning for expansion and estimates of costs with

GSA, and as a result of that they have accepted certain expansion assumptions and come up with certain cost estimates.

They see the estimated cost of fiscal year 1980 as about $6.6 million, rising to a level of $10.5 million which, projected with inflation, would become about $12.7 million in 1984.

Could you discuss for us the expansions, enhancements, and improvements that would be contemplated in these annual cost estimates?

Mr. GRIFFIN. The inflation as you mentioned would have a great deal to do with it.

If the plans as we foresee them—and these, of course, have to be coordinated with OMB and with the Congress—then we would first of all hopefully look forward to a Center in each State. Some thought is being given to identifying with the State capitols so that we can encourage the participation at all levels and provide for it if it is possible.

Second, in order to anticipate the increased volume of inquiries but with a modest expansion in existing and personnel levels in new Centers. The communication activity is part of the reason for the increased dollars in attempting, on either a WATS or a tieline basis to the 800 numbers, to provide sufficiently for communication access as opposed to just putting a lot of people in there. I think that the principal increase would be in the access to the phone systems, to improve that and to make it genuinely convenient to all the persons in the country if at all possible. That is really where the main cost would lie.

Mr. BURTON. What were the criteria for establishing the Centers at their present sites? What criteria would be applied for expansion of new sites?

Mr. GRIFFIN. Basically, we have followed the population index in attempting to address service to the principal areas of that population.

We are considering an approach, as I just mentioned, of shifting somewhat from the population index formula to addressing a multilevel of Government service. But that will take quite a bit of planning.

But it will be one of the two approaches. It will be done on a definite population or intrastate and municipality approach.

Mr. BURTON. What would the criteria be for the present telephone tieline services and toll-free lines, and the criteria for the expansion of those?

Mr. GRIFFIN. That has not been totally decided upon. The tieline approach which we now use is considerably less costly than the WATS or 800 number, but in order to reach all of the people in the States, the communication rates would have to be addressed to decide which approach would be the most serviceable and the most productive.

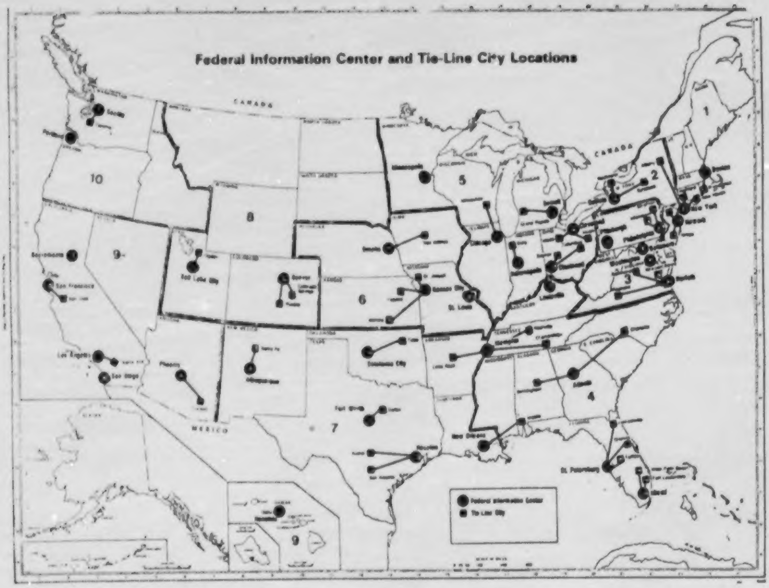
But, in order to reach the people in all of the areas, particularly the semiurban or rural areas and the urban areas, we may have to go in many cases to a WATS 800 number in the various States.

But, as I say, the tieline is considerably less expensive. That is why we are able to maintain the cost at a fairly low level.

Mr. BURTON. Can you explain this? We have a map here that shows the Northern Plains States. There is only one Center which is in Minneapolis with no tielines.

Without objection, this material will be inserted into the record at this point.

[The map follows:]


Federal Information Center and Tie-Line City Locations
CANADA
MEXICO
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
Federal Information Center
Tie-Line City

Mr. Burton. In the Carolinas, there is only one tieline city which is at Charlotte, N.C.; and Maine, Vermont, and New Hampshire do not have any tieline cities, and yet Florida has two Centers and four tieline cities. What about that?

Mr. Griffin. The center of population dictates things, but as Mr. Puritano indicated earlier about the passing the hat, it has not always been the most functional arrangement to go to other agencies. Seventeen of them in 1978 asked them for $180,000 for each agency, and in 1979 it would be contemplated that they would have to pay $235,000 per agency.

Every time there is an increase in any of the sharing programs—as I am sure you can appreciate—there is a certain amount of reluctance on the part of agencies to give money to another agency to perform a function that that agency is getting some credit for or some identification for, so that we have attempted to the best of our ability to maintain these costs at the lowest level of expansion as necessary.

I will ask Mr. Ireland if he wants to comment further on why, such as in the Plains States, there is only one Center with only one tieline. I believe it is a matter of following the population index and controlling costs.

Mr. Ireland, do you want to add anything?

Mr. Ireland. On the point of controlling costs, let me say this. That is a very important consideration. Several years ago when we were considering what to do about Sacramento, Calif., we found out that it would be cheaper to open up an information center in Sacramento than to have a tieline to San Francisco. For some reason the rates out there are outrageously high.

Mr. Burton. The telephone rates?

Mr. Ireland. Yes.

Mr. Griffin. But basically, the matter of expansion has been the population and controlling costs. Is that right?

Mr. IRELAND. Yes.

Mr. BURTON. They have Centers in Omaha, Pittsburgh, Indianapolis, Detroit, and Philadelphia. All of these have relatively low activity. Is that because people just aren't aware that the service is there?

Mr. IRELAND. It is a combination of two things. The OMB report justifiably points out that we have tremendous staffing. That is one of the reasons.

Another reason is probably lack of public service announcements going out in those areas and the unwillingness of the local media to give us a lot of time. We find that when the public stations will give our announcements, our volume increased.

Mr. GRIFFIN. I think Mr. Ireland will agree with me that it is the location of the Center which is important. Some of the comparative figures which you are addressing there, Mr. Chairman, that is, some of the Centers are in a well-serviced building or in the lobby and so people go to the Information Centers sometimes for trivial questions as well as important questions.

We are gradually bringing the program into a nonlobby area so that they are not used for inconsequential requests.

Mr. BURTON. In San Francisco it is in the lobby of our Federal Building and it was kind of deceptive because information at the Emporium Department Store had one. I was not aware that it was really a Federal Information Center. I thought it was a directions center.

Mr. GRIFFIN. It is important for us not to have a disproportionate amount of the Center personnel time devoted to those kinds of inquiries and not have the outlying district serviced on the telephone.

As you will read in the OMB study, this is one of the recommendations that they made for us, that is, for us to continue to work in that direction. That is one of the principal efforts being undertaken in the program.

Some of the imbalances, I am sure you will agree, Mr. Ireland, will be reflected in that kind of inquiry.

Mr. BURTON. If somebody asked for the restroom and cafeteria that wouldn't be counted, would it?

Mr. GRIFFIN. People in Boston would not do that. But maybe other places would.

Mr. BURTON. Boston is up and Omaha is down. Do the Center cities and tieline cities where you have the U.S. Government in the telephone book have a box in there that would say "Federal Information Service"?

Mr. GRIFFIN. Yes, sir.

Mr. BURTON. Right, so it stands out?

Mr. GRIFFIN. Yes; I must say that we have had excellent cooperation in that regard from A.T. & T. and the members of the Bell System in trying to facilitate these things. As I remember many years ago—I have not talked to them in many years—but when we were expanding the program in the initial days it was savings to them as well for their directory assistance to have that load taken off them. The more effective these Government Information Centers and Federal Information Centers became the less the burden there was on the telephone companies.

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Mr. **Burton**. How were the contribution arrangements from the agencies formalized under the present arrangement? You mentioned at one time each had to come up with $178,000. Did GSA coordinate that?

Mr. **Griffin**. Yes; we coordinated through OMB and all the actual expenses on a shared basis.

Mr. **Burton**. You sliced up evenly like a pie and not based on how many people had a question on commerce and how many people had other types of questions; is that right?

Mr. **Griffin**. Yes; they share alike. Just like cutting up the pie.

Mr. **Burton**. What are the grade levels——

Mr. **Griffin**. For the type of service and the level I only disagree with one thing that the OMB representatives said this morning. I would like to put this on the record. We in GSA really believe that these information specialists do not handle questions directly themselves on a last resort basis. They handle many, many questions without referring them to agencies. They have become highly skilled.

The grade level is very low. In fact, we are having a great deal of difficulty with the Civil Service Commission trying to keep some of the jobs at grades 7 and 6. They seem bent on examining those levels and reducing those at the 5 and 4 levels. We are asking these people in the Centers—and they are performing and providing a high degree of skill—for a high degree of knowledge at very low levels.

I think the highest in the country is a grade 9. Is that right?

Mr. **Ireland**. That is right.

Mr. **Griffin**. So we are talking about people who are working very hard, hundreds of thousands of questions are handled, and the GS levels are very low.

This is something we are discussing with the Civil Service Commission to attempt to put some realism in their approach. We are talking about modest grade levels.

Mr. **Burton**. What kind of qualifications do you seek?

Mr. **Griffin**. I do not know exactly the job characteristics, but certainly we are looking for people who have the abilities in dealing with the public and dealing with constituencies of one kind or another. They must be articulate and have some degree of education.

It is a general information specialist type job description as developed basically by the Civil Service Commission. We do try to get some bilingual exposure.

Mr. **Burton**. I guess in our area you would have to have that?

Mr. **Ireland**. Yes; you need three languages in San Francisco.

Mr. **Burton**. What differences have been noted in the relative quality of service among the Information Centers with respect to the inquiries in the city where the Center is and then with respect to the tieline city inquiries? Is there any difference?

Mr. **Ireland**. In the quality of the service?

Mr. **Burton**. Yes.

Mr. **Ireland**. I would say there is absolutely no difference in the quality of the service. I would say though that it is my belief—and I think that statistics will bring this out—that you are more apt to get a busy signal in a tieline city if you call from a tieline city because there are fewer lines.

Mr. **Burton**. How are the Centers inspected and how is the performance rated?

New Orleans is 500 miles from the regional headquarters in Fort Worth, Tex. What kind of supervision is there? How do you evaluate the performance of the individual Centers and their employees?

Mr. **Griffin**. We have good regional staffs in these areas. Basically they report to the Director of Business Affairs who is in the public service and public affairs area himself. They are regularly inspected by our regional activity as well as our Washington representatives like Mr. Ireland and Ms. Woods and Mr. Knenlien. They are constantly checking them and checking the efficacy on a continuing basis. It is something that we look at very carefully.

Mr. **Burton**. What kinds of records do they keep concerning the inquiries?

Mr. **Ireland**. They keep a statistical record. They count 6 days a month. They make actual counts of all inquiries.

Mr. **Burton**. What do they do the other 24 days?

Mr. **Ireland**. The statisticians tell us that if we count all those days we will get an accurate figure and the other days we do not count.

Mr. **Burton**. In other words, they do not keep records and notes of each call?

Mr. **Ireland**. They do not. However, they do make monthly reports to us in Washington pointing out problem areas and difficulties they have had with agencies and unique questions, and good questions, that should be passed on to us in Washington so that we can relay the answers to other Centers.

Mr. **Burton**. Let us say a call comes in to someone. They do not keep a record. For example, the call dealt with social security. The question was answered here. The questioner was referred to the agency, and so on. That is not done? They do not have time to do that, that is not worthwhile, or what?

Mr. **Griffin**. The administrative costs would be quite high for that if you attempted to do that.

Mr. **Burton**. Do you do that on 6 days or do you just count numbers again?

Mr. **Ireland**. What is that?

Mr. **Burton**. Do you just count numbers of inquiries or do you, for example——

Mr. **Ireland**. They write down the unique questions that come in. They write down the difficult questions.

We know exactly where the calls are coming from and what agencies can respond if we cannot respond, and so on.

Mr. **Burton**. In other words, they keep track of unique situations and trouble areas rather than "call on social security problem" and "referred to so and so"? Do you provide manuals for the Centers with instruction?

Mr. **Ireland**. We do. We have recently completed such a manual with detailed instructions on how the Centers are to be operated.

Mr. **Burton**. You recently completed it?

Mr. **Ireland**. Yes.

Mr. **Burton**. They have been in action since——

Mr. **Ireland**. This is one of the deficiencies pointed out in the OMB study.

Mr. **Burton**. You did not have a manual?

Mr. **Ireland**. Yes; that is right. We now have it.

Mr. **Burton**. In other words, we have statistics that show inquiries for the Department of the Treasury, or something like that, in fiscal year 1977. Those numbers are gotten by extrapolating what happens on the fixed days?

Mr. **Ireland**. Right.

Mr. **Burton**. I would asume at certain times of the year, the Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms Bureau is coming out with a new regulation, for example, to take away our guns.

Mr. **Ireland**. You are saying that we might miss that?

Mr. **Burton**. No. I'm saying it might give you a distorted point of view, depending on when the days are. If something is really hot with an agency, then you might have that situation. You know what I am saying?

If something is cooking in that 6-day period, then you would not get a call to an Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms Bureau for a month. Then all of a sudden you might get a hot issue.

Mr. **Griffin**. Approaching it from the statistician's point of view, that would balance out, I think, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. **Burton**. It would probably not be that important, anyway, especially if it is all going to be generally funded through GSA rather than——

Mr. **Griffin**. There is no way that we could do that. The same thing would be true in a heavy taxing season. That would be balanced out by the rest of the 10 months, so I think they are approaching this on a valid basis.

A heavy statistical accounting would of course call for more people and I would rather not see them do that.

Mr. **Burton**. How are the services publicized basically—by public interest spots?

Mr. **Griffin**. The Washington staff and the regional staff as well as the Centers get just as much publicity as they possibly can. As I said, the phone company has good information, announcements on several pages in the principal cities as well as sufficient pages in the nonregional cities.

So we pay for new advertising but we have pretty good success in getting the local media to publicize, particularly when some of the representatives of the regional office and the Washington staff are in the area. It is something that we have to work out all of the time.

Mr. **Burton**. It just dawned on me that the Members of Congress doing the constituent mailings could do that.

Mr. **Griffin**. There has been some of that, particularly in the news letters.

Mr. **Burton**. Somebody at GSA might be able to break this down by State and send a copy to each Member of Congress. They could put it in a newsletter. That would be quite helpful.

Mr. **Griffin**. That is a good idea, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. **Burton**. Do the Centers ever do any followup activity with respect to inquiries made?

Mr. **Ireland**. Yes; we do. We do followups. They are normally not required except in difficult situations. It is important to us that we get the caller's problem solved. We do follow through.

Mr. **Burton**. What do you have in the Centers generally as far as resources, just the people?

Mr. **Ireland**. Yes, of course, we have the personnel. We have many reference books. We have handouts that Federal agencies give us for people who walk in and ask questions. These sometimes can be answered in a booklet. Maybe they are asking for general information. We have that.

We have extensive files at the Centers.

Mr. **Burton**. Do the Centers ever seek to bridge telephone calls at all to connect the caller to the appropriate agency so the caller does not have to make a toll call?

Mr. **Griffin**. That is one of the options in the OMB study, that is, to have widespread bridging capability. However, that is one of the factors which gets into some of the heavy investment cost.

This is certainly something that OMB and GSA, and particularly GSA in making recommendations to OMB, will be looking at in the future.

Mr. **Burton**. Who will make those option choices, GSA? In other words, they laid out an option paper—that is, OMB did.

Mr. **Griffin**. We will have to zero-base budget the whole thing and make studies inasmuch as we have considerably more knowledge of the whole program than OMB. I would think that GSA's recommendations would be probably the most notable.

Fortunately for us and for your bill, the OMB has a healthy attitude on this program. As they indicated, they were surprised, I think, at the success of the service which is being rendered.

I believe that they have a healthy attitude and bridging is one of the serious options for GSA to measure and make a recommendation to OMB about.

Mr. **Burton**. Let us say they get a call which is an emergency call from the caller's standpoint. How would they handle that? I guess that is part of their training and their sensitivity needs on the job?

Mr. **Ireland**. We have a former supervisor of the Washington, D.C., Center.

Linda, why don't you comment on that?

Mrs. **Sutcliffe**. Mr. Chairman, we do not get a large number of emergency calls in the Centers of the nature of suicide prevention or those kinds of emergencies. The kinds that we get are characterized by deaths overseas where there is a problem shipping a body back. That is not very cheerful but that is what happens.

Nonreceipt of retirement checks or other kinds of assistance checks where people cannot pay their rent are some of the things we deal with. We have a liaison network set up in our program, both in the Centers locally and in the national program here we have contacts in the agencies, and we can get them generally to expedite serious problems like that.

Mr. **Burton**. That would be one example.

Let us suppose that someone calls—this happens in my district office—for social security checks 3 months late. If you call the agency on something like that, I guess they give you better response than they give the citizen who has been trying to deal with them to get a response?

Mrs. Sutcliffe. I would not make that blanket statement. Yes; in many cases we do have access—social security is a particularly difficult one. Their workload is such that I guess they have their problems also. But in many instances—and it will vary from city to city—we can call and get pretty fast responses.

In the Washington Center I have had a record for social security checks that did not get through and that was about $1,200, as I recall. That was a huge thing but that was unusual.

Mr. Burton. I see.

Mrs. Sutcliffe. Generally the response by the agencies is quite good on these kinds of things.

Mr. Burton. You do take into consideration in certain areas the necessity for bilingual personnel?

Mr. Griffin. Yes, sir. I should also mention, Mr. Chairman, that the people on the Washington staff have built up a nice arrangement between agencies so that emergency developments in the programs are called to the attention of the Center immediately so the information is almost totally current and up to date. We are not giving out bad information on programs as they existed but rather we are up to date on these.

Mr. Burton. In your statement you mentioned the San Diego Government Information Center. If this bill is enacted what authority would be relied on to continue such a Center or increase the number of such Centers?

Mr. Griffin. In discussing this with the legal office, we have not had any problem in the States or municipalities or counties in taking care of their fair share of the proportionate number of calls.

It is as though we were collecting from other agencies.

If a direct appropriation is given and if the bill is enacted, there could be a legal question. There is no problem on the collection, let me say, about their share of the cost, but I believe it is based on the legislation that those funds would have to be deposited into the Treasury as opposed to being returned into the program. So, it could have a commensurate effect on the financing for the program, but there would be no effect on the cost to the U.S. Government.

The money would not be going back into the same pocket. It would be going into general revenue.

Mr. Burton. What would be the legal authority for such an arrangement? Would it be the Intergovernmental Cooperation Act—something of that sort?

Mr. Griffin. I am not entirely clear as to whether or not you would need a direct legal authority. We would be collecting for a service rendered which would be immediately deposited in miscellaneous receipts.

If we wanted to use it in the program, I believe that we would require authority under this bill probably.

Mr. Burton. What would your suggestion be? Would that be a more desirable situation?

Mr. Griffin. I am more interested in getting permanent authority.

Mr. Burton. Would OMB have a heart attack over that?

Mr. Griffin. It would complicate the bill, yes. Until we are ready to face up to an expansion of that activity, the costs—that is, I would prefer not to wait.

Mr. **Burton**. I have one other question.

What is the benefit of having one of these things in a State? Most State capitals are not in population areas. Would it not be better to have this in Cook County rather than in Springfield, and in L.A., in the bay area, rather than in Sacramento, and so on?

Mr. **Griffin**. It would only be effective, Mr. Chairman, if the direction with the State governments became very popular, if the State governments and cities and the counties, for example, really became attracted to the program and wanted to participate.

I would be more inclined myself to continue with the Centers in the major population areas.

But I wanted to point out to the committee that that is one of the problems which is being explored. I think we should examine it from the service between levels of government. If we cannot provide a real service then we should at least consider providing the real service in the determination of the location of the Center.

Presently I think that we would be probably more inclined to go with the population centers.

Mr. **Burton**. I have no further questions.

I have bulletin No. 49 from the Federal Information Centers, dated May 11.

Without objection, this material will be inserted into the record at this point.

[The material follows:]

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FEDERAL INFORMATION CENTERS BULLETIN

General Services Administration Washington, D.C. 20405

MAY 16 1978

Bulletin #49
May 11, 1978

TO: Federal Information Center Managers - For Action
Regional Director of Business Affairs - For Information

The General Services Administration is initiating steps to eliminate the monitoring of telephone calls by all Federal civilian agencies. To this end, there is to be no monitoring of telephone calls in any Federal Information Center by any FIC employee for any reason.

Should the need arise for more than one Information Specialist to deal with an inquirer at the same time to resolve a question, the inquirer must be informed that another party or other parties are on the line.

Donald R Knenlein
DONALD R. KNENLEIN
Coordinator
Federal Information Center Program

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION
WASHINGTON DC 20405

May 11, 1978

REPLY TO ATTN OF: Director of Public Affairs, AV

SUBJECT: Service Observation equipment - R-3, FIC

To: John F. Galuardi, 3A

Please take immediate steps to remove the Service Observation feature from the Washington, DC, FIC telephone equipment package.

While we recognize the usefulness of such a device in evaluating employee performance, it will be necessary in the future for FIC supervisors to use other methods to perform the evaluation function.

This action is being taken as part of a GSA initiative to eliminate the monitoring of telephone calls by all Federal civilian agencies and is in keeping with the provisions and the spirit of the Privacy Act.

RILLA M. WOODS
566-1297

3350
Rayburn

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

October 27, 1969

MEMORANDUM TO THE HEADS OF EXECUTIVE
DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES

SUBJECT: Better Service to the Public

On assuming the responsibilities of this office, I made the observation that our Executive Branch needs to be more responsive to the people we serve. Early in the Administration I directed the reorganization of Federal regional offices so that for the first time related agencies will have common regional headquarters and common regional boundaries. I established the Office of Intergovernmental Relations to smooth coordination of Federal, State and local efforts.

As a means of furthering better service to the public, I believe the program establishing Federal Information Centers to provide single points of inquiry to the public on all Government activities is a good one. It should now be extended from its present number of nine to every major metropolitan area. I request that all agency heads cooperate in this effort. They should also explore the feasibility of combining Government information and referral centers in a community into one public information center.

In addition to providing easy access for the citizen to information about all Government services from a central location, the Federal Information Centers should also be places for receiving ideas and suggestions from the public. This would carry out the "listening post" concept which I first mentioned during the campaign and which received enthusiastic response across the country. The newest Center, opening October 28 in Philadelphia, will be the first to embody the "listening post" idea. Civil Service Commission Chairman Robert E. Hampton and General Services Administrator

Robert L. Kunzig will notify you of the procedures to be instituted for handling the special correspondence which this Center and the succeeding "listening posts" will generate.

I am asking Chairman Hampton, whose staff initially developed the Federal Information Center concept, and Administrator Kunzig, whose Agency has had experience in administering the existing Information Centers, to proceed as rapidly as possible in establishing additional Centers. The General Services Administration will operate them. The costs of the Centers should be shared by all benefiting agencies. State and local governments are to be invited to participate so that a citizen might receive information relative to all levels of government from one central point in a community.

In a further effort to meet the challenge of helping our citizens with more responsive and more effective service from their Executive Branch, I have asked Chairman Hampton to coordinate agency activities in bringing the best possible service to the public in all other practical ways. I request that you consider what steps you can take now to improve your service to the public and how you can assure that action will be taken to make your service as responsive as possible. Please designate a top official who will have responsibility for providing leadership and continued attention to improving your organization's service to the public and send the name of this official to Chairman Hampton.

I have asked Chairman Hampton and Administrator Kunzig to report to me periodically on the progress made in further improving service to the public, with particular attention to the Federal Information Center and the "listening posts." They will be in touch with you for suggestions and assistance in this regard. I solicit your personal support in this program to make Federal agency service to the public as responsive as possible.

Mr. **Burton**. It says:

> General Services Administration is initiating steps to eliminate the monitoring of telephone calls by all Federal civilian agencies. To this end, there is to be no monitoring of phone calls in any Federal Information Center by any employee for any reason. Should the need arise for more than one information specialist to deal with an inquirer and at the same time to resolve a question, the inquirer must be informed of another party or other parties along the line.

That is a civil liberties protection.

Mr. **Griffin**. There was an effort by the Centers to train their people, particularly with regard to incentive and motivation, to make sure that the specialists were really informing the public. An effort also was made to determine the need for additional training for the information specialists.

Recognizing the realities of the situation that this could be misunderstood, that type of monitoring has totally been discontinued. The need for training has to be determined, and it will be done on a supervisory basis.

Mr. **Romney**. Mr. Griffin, I would like to present a personal experience that I had recently. I was pleased to note in the Washington metropolitan area telephone books—all three of them—that there are boxes in the U.S. Government section of the books saying, "Confused? So you don't know where to turn?" A number is given for a Federal Information Center which, I gather, is located on Seventh Street. Is that right?

Mr. **Griffin**. That is right.

Mr. **Romney**. I have since asked a number of colleagues with whom I deal on a day-to-day basis if they have ever noticed that before. Not one of them had.

I must confess that many times I have used that section of the telephone book. I never noticed it myself. I was not aware that it was on every single page, for example.

The point is this. How effective is that little box as a signal to the person who is searching? Have you made an evaluation of its effectiveness?

Mr. **Griffin**. We have had many good reports, Mr. Romney, from people who have used that box. I believe it is more effective than some of your colleagues have reported. I really think that the biggest step forward that we can accomplish is with a further expansion of the blue pages project which we have done.

It will be devoted entirely to Government but not only just a listing of the Government activities. It will have a functional arrangement as well. Highlighting it on those pages could be done more aggressively.

Maybe, Mr. Ireland, we should address ourselves to the phone company. They have been most cooperative with us in the past because apparently from their own testimony it saves them money and the need for directory assistance people so maybe we can do more with those boxes until we complete the blue pages project.

The blue page is something that these folks have been working on for quite some time. It is finally getting down the road. I really think that it is where the beneficial experiences are going to be.

Mr. **Burton**. I would like to make a suggestion. Usually in the front of the phone books you have a number for police and fire and so on.

There are a listing of 10 or 12 emergency numbers. Maybe you could include in there the Federal Information Center numbers.

Mr. **Griffin**. Let me assure you, Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee, that we will reexamine more effective ways of addressing this question. We will probably also enhance identification in the phone books.

Mr. **Burton**. I would think also that a letter to Congressmen from the States which are served and making them knowledgeable would be a good thing. I do not think it would be improper for you to suggest that. When we list various numbers in my newsletter, I have not listed these Centers. From now on I think I will do that.

It is amazing as to the results that you can get there.

Mr. **Griffin**. We will do that.

Mr. **Romney**. May I supplement this with my own personal experience? In Kansas City 2½ years ago, I noticed in the early morning a television spot commercial that was well done and in color. It made sense and was appealing. I have not seen these in any other city. I take it from your comments earlier that there may be difficulties in getting through into using this medium in other cities.

Mr. **Griffin**. We have more success in some areas than others. We have great success in some areas and not that much success in others. It is something we do work on.

Mr. **Burton**. Mr. Walker, any questions?

Mr. **Walker**. Mr. Chairman, I have no questions.

Mr. **Burton**. Ms. Halterman?

Ms. **Halterman**. Is there any mechanism whereby successful procedural or managerial innovations at one Center are shared with the other Centers?

Mr. **Griffin**. I will let Mr. Ireland comment. They definitely work on that all the time.

Mr. **Ireland**. Absolutely. We have a national liaison group in the Washington office which sends out weekly mailings to all the Centers. What they send them is what they get from the other Centers. In addition to that, they will inform them about new programs that have come out in Washington. We have very good communications between Centers and from Washington to the Centers.

Ms. **Halterman**. If one of the operators had to search a particular problem that is likely to occur, would you put that in a newsletter?

Mr. **Ireland**. Absolutely. When they get questions like that, they are supposed to let us know immediately so we can inform the other Centers.

Ms. **Halterman**. The San Diego Information Center was mentioned earlier. Is that the goal for all of the Centers, to have them Federal, State, and local?

Mr. **Griffin**. It is one of the options within the limits of financing which would be available to us. It is certainly an interesting experiment and one which we believe we will be involved in, in the future.

There are the cost factors. The willingness of the States, municipalities, and counties to share the proportionate costs is there. In some areas, the local ordinance limitations on what they can pay for and cannot pay for is a problem.

But it is something we expect to explore further down the road.

The State of California, as I understand it, has signed an agreement where they are willing to explore this on a statewide basis with all the Centers out there. It has been so successful they want to expand it.

Mr. BURTON. In the State, I'm pretty sure this was signed into law—the setting up of the toll-free lines throughout the State for people to be able to call the capital and State agencies. That is one of the few things Ronald Reagan and I agreed on.

The other was that we were both certain that the Russian Revolution was in fact a Communist plot.

I have one other comment. I am talking about publicizing now. Conceivably, other Federal agencies have newsletters and mail communications to the public. Maybe it would be a good idea to mention the FIC's, unless they would rather have people calling them.

Mr. GRIFFIN. There is a problem, yes. Once they start their program, there is a great desire to keep those people busy and in those programs, but this is something that we are asking for assistance from other agencies on.

Mr. BURTON. They could publicize these numbers as well.

Mr. GRIFFIN. Yes.

Mr. BURTON. If there are no further questions, we want to thank you folks very much. Our hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:05 a.m., the subcommittee adjourned, to reconvene subject to the call of the Chair.]

FEDERAL INFORMATION CENTERS

FRIDAY, JUNE 23, 1978

House of Representatives,
Government Activities and
Transportation Subcommittee
of the Committee on Government Operations,
San Francisco, Calif.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 10 a.m., in the Ceremonial Court Room, U.S. Federal Building and Courthouse, 450 Golden Gate Avenue, San Francisco, Calif., Hon. John L. Burton (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Present: Representatives John L. Burton and Robert S. Walker.

Also present: Benjamin L. Palumbo, staff director; Miles Q. Romney, counsel; and Rachel Halterman, minority professional staff, Committee on Government Operations.

Mr. Burton. The Government Activities and Transportation Subcommittee of the Committee on Government Operations will come to order.

Ladies and gentlemen, this subcommittee hearing today is to deal with the subject matter of the Federal Information Centers and legislation that is presently pending before Congress. My name is John Burton. I am the chairman of the subcommittee. I represent San Francisco and Marin County.

The gentleman on my left is Representative Robert Walker from Lancaster County in Pennsylvania.

To my immediate right is Quin Romney, the counsel for the subcommittee.

To my far right is Ben Palumbo, the staff director; and on the far left is Rachel Halterman, who is the minority professional staff member of the subcommittee.

The purpose of the hearing is to take further testimony on legislation that would give permanent statutory authority to the Federal Information Centers.

These Centers are now in 38 metropolitan areas of the country. They are, also, connected by toll-free phone lines to 40 other cities. They serve as a "where to turn to center" that can assist citizens who have questions about Federal Government activities and services.

Last year the Centers dealt with over 8 million inquiries.

GSA operates the various Centers today. Our legislation would continue GSA operation and specifically authorize the appropriation of funds for the Centers. The two bills presently before this subcommittee are H.R. 12583 and an identical bill numbered H.R. 12744.

Mr. Walker and I are both sponsors of this legislation, which came to the committee last month as a result of the GSA in an administration-backed proposal. In 1966, President Johnson tested this idea when he set up the first Center in Atlanta. Congress has continued on a pilot basis each year by appropriating funds for its operations to GSA and to other participating agencies. Right now about half the people in the country have access to the Centers through either personal visits or toll-free calls.

At our earlier hearing in Washington, we received testimony from Chairman Brooks of the full Government Operations Committee and from Representative Frank Horton, who is the committee's ranking minority member. Both of these distinguished gentlemen are, also, sponsors of this legislation.

In addition, we had testimony from the Office of Management and Budget and the GSA's Central Office.

Today's purpose is to hear from people who actually manage and supervise these Centers in California, as well as to hear from officials of the California government and from people outside of GSA who know the Centers, work with them, and use them.

California has four of these Federal Information Centers, more than any other State. Three of the Centers are among the most active in the country, and we look forward to the testimony we will get here in California and know that it will be much help in building a record to pass legislation giving permanent authorization to this program.

Leading off this morning we will hear from the Acting Regional Director of region 9, Mr. Arthur Barton, who will introduce other GSA witnesses.

Mr. Barton, before you proceed, I would like to express on my behalf and behalf of the subcommittee our sorrow at the passing last month of Tom Hannon, longtime Regional Administrator, who I had in my office on many occasions to deal with the subject matter of Hamilton Field, and we were always pleased with the type of help and information we received, especially when I knew that he knew that that issue was a big pain in the neck to most of the people involved, and we do know that Tom was deeply interested in this system as far as the Federal Information Center, and we share the loss of the people in the region.

Mr. Walker would you like to proceed.

Mr. Walker. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I might say at the outset that I was very pleased to join with you in cosponsoring the legislation authorizing the permanent establishment of Federal Information Centers. I want to commend you for holding these field hearings on the subject in an effort to solicit testimony from those who have been actively involved in running the Centers, as well as those who utilize them.

It is particularly delightful for me to take part in these proceedings surrounded by the beauty of your magnificent city. I know that you know a little bit about my district. It is nice to be in San Francisco, and I am pleased to see that the fog lifted for a change so I will be able to see the city a little.

The bipartisan support for the FIC legislation is due in large part to the tremendous success of the 38 Centers now in existence. The need for this type of service to the public is obvious.

We are told by the polltakers that the American people have come to view the Federal Government as impersonal and unresponsive, and I believe exposure to FIC personnel and informational capabilities will go a long way toward dispelling that kind of attitude.

Mr. Chairman, I know there are many witnesses who will describe FIC activities, needs, and capabilities. I will yield back to you to introduce the first witness. Thank you very much.

Mr. BURTON. Thank you very much, Mr. Walker. Mr. Barton?

STATEMENT OF ARTHUR O. BARTON, ACTING REGIONAL ADMINISTRATOR OF GENERAL SERVICES, REGION 9

Mr. BARTON. I am Arthur Barton, Acting Regional Administrator of General Services for region 9.

As you know, this region has always worked closely with you and your subcommittee. We believe the relationship has been a good one, and we hope it will continue for a long time.

We wish to thank you for the opportunity to testify on the operations of our Federal Information Centers in California and on H.R. 12583 and H.R. 12744, bills which would establish the FIC program nationwide.

I would like to introduce you to Ms. Mary Filippini, who is our regional coordinator for the Federal Information Center program.

STATEMENT OF MARY FILIPPINI, REGIONAL COORDINATOR, FEDERAL INFORMATION CENTERS, REGION 9

Ms. FILIPPINI. Thank you, Mr. Barton.

Mr. Chairman, I am Mary Filippini, the regional coordinator of the FIC's in region 9 which encompasses the States of California, Nevada, Arizona, and Hawaii; 6 of the 38 FIC's are located in this region; 4 are here in California, San Francisco, Sacramento, Los Angeles, and San Diego.

We, also, have Centers in Phoenix and Honolulu. In addition, there are toll-free telephone tielines from Orange County to our Los Angeles Center and from San Jose to San Francisco. These Centers handled over 1.7 million of the 8 million inquiries nationwide last fiscal year.

This represents over 20 percent of the total volume.

The San Diego Center is a unique operation, in that it is the only Government Information Center in the country. In cooperation with the State of California and the city of San Diego, the GIC provides information and referral service on Federal, State, and local government programs.

For the past year GSA has been working with the Department of General Services of the State of California on a pilot feasibility study to join State and Federal information services, using the San Diego GIC as a model for providing a statewide Government Information Service.

I would like now to introduce to you the managers of the four California Information Centers and have them briefly describe their Center. These people have all been with their respective Centers since their inception.

First is Ruth Beadle.

STATEMENT OF RUTH BEADLE, MANAGER, SAN FRANCISCO FIC

Ms. BEADLE. Mr. Chairman, I am Ruth Beadle, manager of the San Francisco Federal Information Center. This Center received over 380,000 inquiries from the public last year.

We are currently located in the lobby of the building, but we will soon be moving to office space adjacent to the lobby.

The Center was established in 1968, and has a staff of five full-time employees. We have a toll-free line from San Jose.

Ms. FILIPPINI. Next is Warren Snaider.

STATEMENT OF WARREN SNAIDER, MANAGER, SACRAMENTO FIC

Mr. SNAIDER. Mr. Chairman, I am Warren Snaider, manager of the Sacramento Federal Information Center.

Last year we handled almost 100,000 inquiries from the public with a staff of two full-time employees. Established in 1972, we are located next to the lobby in the Federal Building in U.S. Courthouse at 650 Capitol Mall.

Over the next few months we will be working with American Telephone & Telegraph Co. and Pacific Telephone & Telegraph Co. to develop a blue pages section in the Sacramento telephone directory to make Government services more accessible to the public.

Ms. FILIPPINI. Next is Evelyn Tirre.

STATEMENT OF EVELYN TIRRE, MANAGER, LOS ANGELES FIC

Ms. TIRRE. Mr. Chairman, I am Evelyn Tirre, manager of the Los Angeles Federal Information Center.

The Los Angeles FIC answered over 560,000 inquiries from the public last year, and we now have staff of 7 people full time.

We opened in 1969, and are located in office space adjacent to the lobby of the Federal Building at 300 North Los Angeles Street.

Monday of this week this Center became the first location west of the Mississippi and the third nationally to offer the public Dial-a-Reg, an advanced look at what Government rules and regulations will appear in the next day's Federal Register.

We anticipate that the public will respond very favorably to this new service. We, also, have a tieline from Orange County to our Center.

Ms. FILIPPINI. Finally, Mr. Chairman, there is Marie Pugh.

STATEMENT OF MARIE PUGH, MANAGER, GOVERNMENT INFORMATION CENTER, SAN DIEGO

Ms. PUGH. Mr. Chairman, I am Marie Pugh, manager of the Government Information Center in the system. Last year over one-third of our 370,000 inquiries pertained to the State, city, or county local governments. This compares with a nationwide average of approximately 8 percent. The Center has a full-time staff of seven and was opened in 1971. We are located in space next to the lobby of the Federal Building at 880 Front Street, San Diego.

Mr. **Barton.** Mr. Chairman, we will be pleased to answer any questions you may have.

Mr. **Burton.** First of all, Mr. Barton, I would like to thank you for the courtesy and help that you staff provided in helping us set up this meeting and making the arrangements for it. We appreciate that.

You are going to move the Center that is downstairs in the lobby to a different location, which I assume will probably take some alterations for the new space, et cetera. Do you have a timetable on when the Center will be——

Ms. **Filippini.** Mr. Chairman, I have discussed it with our buildings management people today and understand that we are next on the list. In getting the Center rolling they estimate it will take anywhere from 30 to 60 days to revamp the space in there and do some construction on a counter. So, at the maximum we are hoping about 60 days.

Mr. **Burton.** Will they keep using the structure that is there now as you move? Will they keep the heavy wooden structure that is in the center of the building?

Ms. **Filippini.** The Federal Information Centers will not be using the Center.

Mr. **Burton.** The structure? They will not?

Ms. **Filippini.** They will not, and we are constructing off the lobby a counter space for walk-in traffic, however.

Mr. **Barton.** The Regional Public Building Service, Mr. Chairman, is exploring the possible use under the living buildings program of that for some kind of commercial enterprise like a florist or something of that nature.

Mr. **Burton.** If it is all right with you, the next witness, Mr. Lloyd, former Chairman of the Federal Executive Board of San Francisco and Regional Director of the Trade Commission is here to testify, and he has to make an appointment. I wonder if we could hear from him and then bring you back.

Mr. Lloyd?

STATEMENT OF RAYMOND O. LLOYD, REGIONAL DIRECTOR, FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION

Mr. **Lloyd.** Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity of being here. I thank you, also, for the courtesy of letting me get on early and get on with my other business. I apologize for my dress, but that is one of the benefits of being retired.

Basically, my contribution here is to describe very briefly the origin of the Federal Information Centers, my part in it, the Federal Executive Board's part in it, and then to look ahead to possibly some, what I hope are constructive suggestions that either the committee in its wisdom as to the ultimate legislation that would come out or at least to the General Services Administration in the implementing of the legislation might be aware of down the road.

Back in 1965, as Chairman of the Federal Executive Board, I had two problems. One was the Federal Trade Commission, running that office, and the other was as Chairman to work with committees and to come up with viable constructive and worthwhile projects for our cooperative effort as a board.

At that time the Federal Trade Commission entered into a new era of enforcement activities. In the past we had been a regulatory agency protecting the consumer by regulating business, and thus the consumer, if we regulated wisely, was protected, but not on a direct basis.

At or about that time we moved from the regulatory business into a somewhat direct 1-to-1 confrontation with members of the public. We became a very visible agency. As a result, we noticed in our office and I am sure throughout the country, a tremendous increase in a place for people to telephone and ask questions, unfortunately not just questions about the FTC but a whole range of Federal Government activity questions.

With a rather small staff we had great difficulty in answering both in a helpful way, as well as merely just handling the telephone volume.

My secretary and I undertook to at least get familiar with the Government manual of operations and organization so that we would have a ready reference source of material, but this, obviously, was not the real answer to this growing need.

At the same time as the Chairman of the FEB, I was happy to have a problem that seemed to involve not only the FTC but most of Government in the San Francisco area, and we submitted a suggested public information clearinghouse. The original concept was a telephone answering type of service, but far more than a telephone operator type of service to be provided. We envisioned down the road certainly developing a classification of Federal employees that would be truly expert in Government activities, Government organizations, and thus carrying with it some type of a higher job classification, a more permanent type of staffing than the average telephone informational service that the Federal Government regularly provides.

At that time the then, and now deceased, Tom Hannon was Vice Chairman of the Federal Executive Board, and of course, also, the landlord of the Federal building here, and with Tom's wisdom and help and the fact that his day-to-day line authority involved such a type of envisioned operation, he took the original suggestions that my office made and went on to improve on them.

The suggestion was sent through channels back to the then mentor of all the Federal Executive Boards, John Mason, Chairman of the Civil Service Commission, and Charles Schultz who was then Director, I believe, of OMB, and they liked the idea and with further study decided to open up the first one as the records already show, in Atlanta, Ga., followed by Kansas City and then opening up the similar types of Information Centers throughout the rest of the country, particularly in the major cities where there were Federal Executive Boards, and I believe the initial group was some 15. The basic problem that we had then was how to get qualified people at the grades that it seemed that knowledge and expertise demanded, how to train those people into a whole new area of Government knowledge and of Government activities.

With the help of the Federal executive managers of all of the agencies and with a loaned staff from some of the major agencies here in San

Francisco, we worked on the basic concept of an informational delivery system.

I believe, if my memory serves me correct, we used a spindle system with a suggestion of keywords, of key laws, of key agencies that would permit one of the information specialists a ready source of information should that person be fortunate enough to hear such a keyword by the person on the other end of the telephone line. In the walkup, in the location of this, in the walkup it was not as much of a problem, but that was, and I suspect even today is still a problem which is the ability of this Center or all of the Centers to have access to the type of information that will enable them to give and to deliver the right answers quickly and with a minimum of mistakes.

The job classification and advancement and mobility of the employees in the earlier days, they were on loan from some of the agencies. In my outline that I gave you ahead of this, I find that I made a mistake in at least suggesting that this type of lend-lease personnel, lending of personnel to the Centers, has continued. I have learned since this was sent in to you that they have been under auspices of GSA and that while there is still an allocating of total cost to the major agencies, the actual personnel situation is now a GSA responsibility.

I would suggest that, also, the concept of problem of what the other Federal agencies who are supplying information to the Centers, what their sense of responsibilities would be now and, also, in the future. In the early days when it was still an offspring of the Federal Executive Board, there was a high degree of cooperative attitude among the agencies in San Francisco and very likely existing even today, but during those days it was very easy to get all of the agencies to turn to and support some type of activity such as the Information Centers which was the responsibility of the Board and then later to GSA.

The future under the new act I would leave certainly some words of caution. I have no information on, and I confess to really no knowledge on, the various economics of the operations now and the operations after the legislation goes into effect.

I suspect certainly that if there is a direct budget line responsibility, that there probably would be savings and probably would be a better operation, but it, also, brings with it some of the cautions that I would like to leave with the committee.

The problem, as I see it, would be if it gets into an agency or when it gets into the agency, GSA or any other agency, there may be a tendency to downgrade the staff or downgrade the function, and I would certainly caution that the upgrading should be the key rather than the downgrading. The type of service that is being provided and the type of person necessary to deliver that service has to be recognized as a professional or certainly close on to being classified as a professional, and as such this should not be caught up into the internal budget problems that are facing an individual agency. The other area of caution that I would leave is in the old days and today, for example, where there is a contributing to the cost by some 17 agencies there still may be some concern by these agencies of having spent their money on this. Therefore, they will continue to support.

I don't think that there is the slightest problem of GSA ever losing interest in the welfare of this division of the administration, but I can see some possibilities of the other Federal agencies in the area not having a day-to-day line responsibility, even minimal, such as paying for part of the cost continuing, perhaps, to supply a system of regular information into the Center, and without that input the Centers are perhaps no more effective or can be no more effective than the standard telephone directory in the city.

I certainly commend the innovation of the Boards since over the recent years you have already heard of and will hear more about the expanded coverages and the free telephone toll numbers. Certainly the State-Federal pilot operation in San Diego is, in my opinion, very essential. I think that you will find from the rank and file public that they make very little distinction between the Federal Government or the State government. They hear about laws and regulations, and they know it is government, and therefore, to bring together in a central source a clearinghouse approach to answer a particular need is highly desired, and I think essential.

The blue pages in the telephone directory that is now under consideration I recall again back in the days of the FEB where we tried to get the consumer protection section of the telephone directory, and we had our longstanding battle with Ma Bell and the local concepts that you could not have a separate listing of consumer protection, but with the help of the State and with the help of the Better Business Bureau and our own Board, we were successful in getting a separate listing in the white section for consumer protection. These are all good ideas, and I would certainly leave with you that the original idea for the FIC arose out of an identified need and even more a demand that people have ready access to their Government. I believe that such service is in even greater demand now than at any time in the past.

The FIC's under GSA can and must satisfy that demand. I suggest that innovation and awareness gave rise to the FIC's. Innovation and constant awareness of the future needs and demands of both government and the public should be at the heart of the congressional intent which is embodied in the proposed legislation.

I thank you again for the opportunity of being here. I hope that I have, at least, opened up some areas of thought and further discussion, and I would be very happy to answer any questions that you might have.

Mr. Walker [presiding]. Thank you, Mr. Lloyd. Your testimony was very helpful, and we appreciate your being here. There are a couple of things I would just like to follow up with you on. The phone calls you were getting at FTC—do you think they were typical of most agencies, or do people for some reason or the other pick FTC to call to try to get information on the Federal Government, or is it your point that all Federal agencies are getting this number of calls by somebody who just picks one out of the book and decides to call them to get information about the Federal Government?

Mr. Lloyd. I think it is both really. I think that the FTC for the first time became to some degree a household word, and therefore it was popular to call the FTC.

Obviously, the fact that the same people were calling Government generally in a sort of a desperation was best evident in our answering the phone where the inquirer would say, "Please help me, and please don't refer me again because this is the fourth or the fifth referral."

I think that that really was the fact. An FTC or Government agency has, perhaps, a day-to-day visibility. Something happens and some Government agency steps forward. For example, GSA, when they had the problems with the Indians on the rock out here, I am sure their telephone inquiries rose, not only about the Indian problems but, also, generally.

Mr. WALKER. I think the important point here is if this is a widespread kind of practice in the Federal Government, if this is what is happening in communities that don't have Federal Information Center programs, it seems to me that an inordinate amount of time is probably wasted in Federal agencies simply answering phone calls of people who have called there hoping that someone will steer them in the right direction. The fact is that the employees there may not be at all qualified to steer them in the right direction, and their first response is, well, you know, now if I were going to make that call, who would I call, and it may be completely wrong. That is the reason you get the four, five, and six referrals along the way. It is costing the Govenrment a great deal in both time and money.

Mr. LLOYD. I think that is absolutely correct, sir.

Mr. WALKER. You mentioned the development along the line as the FIC's came into play, of keywords and some things that you used to identify problems and give people an answer. Was this a process of developing some experience with it? Were the keywords something that you developed out of experience as you went along, and then was that shared? Is this something which is shared among the various offices that are doing this kind of work so that everybody has the benefit of the inquires that somebody else is hearing?

Mr. LLOYD. Let me give you an example. At or about that time there was an amendment to the Flammable Fabrics Act, and if, again, my memory serves me correct, one of the keywords we used was flammability or flame or fire or something of that sort, the idea being that if someone called in and said, "I suspect something wrong with a garment," and they had been hearing about through newspaper effort. newspaper articles about the Federal Trade Commission's enforcement of the Flammable Fabrics Act; therefore, it gave them the idea that here is an agency that might have some help or information on a particular problem. Consequently, in order to be of assistance downstairs at the Center, we worked with the Center in selecting in our house those keywords or functions, deceptive advertising, false advertising, guarantees, automobile problems, These were very important words, and they were all set forth on the spindle so that quickly if someone said I have some false or misadvertising or I have been misled or something, they could go to "M" and see right opposite FTC 61270 and refer them directly to it.

Mr. WALKER. My point is, it seems to me, that there are times when a problem would arise in one area that is going to be found in other areas before too long. If there was a shared system of those kinds of key words, other areas might be prepared as this thing begins to impact on them. If flammability, for instance had not been a big issue in Los Angeles but had been one in San Francisco, we could assume that somewhere along the line it might become an issue in Los Angeles as well, and some kind of shared information for those employees would probably help to alleviate the problems of having to develop it in-house all the time.

Mr. LLOYD. My answer to you would be I cannot tell to what extent the FIC's exchange their key lists with other FIC's. FTC found no need to share with these, but I think really if I may take a second, that is what I meant about the future, and the value of some type of ability of GSA to demand, secure, receive the cooperation or demand by legislation constant inputs by the agencies to a new informational input design system or something of that sort that would assure the centers on an up to date constant using key words as an example, a key word input so that today flammable fabrics is no longer a problem, and they probably have not looked at flammable fabrics for quite a while, and I am using that as an example.

Tomorrow the thing may be sale of gold or sale of wheat or something of that sort.

Mr. WALKER. Is there really a present danger in your opinion that the FIC's may lose their total Government image?

Mr. LLOYD. I don't think so. I certainly don't think so because it is going under the full authority of GSA. I think that I found that the old cliche where your money is where your heart is also may have some application.

I noticed that when I was very active in the FEB's that there was a high degree of cooperation, and I saw that my office cooperated as an example. This is the human nature aspect of it. When I got out of the FEB and still was with the agency, the FEB's began to change a little bit, and I honestly lost some interest in the FEB. Now, this is a confession in that sense.

I got back into the FEB when my interest was jabbed or my conscience was pricked by the FEB coming to me type of thing rather than to take affirmative active participation, and I would only suggest that in the area in which there is constant updating and valuable viable information to help the centers be most effective that unless there is some ability by GSA to get and demand that type of relief, I am not saying it won't retain the flavor, I am only cautioning that that should be a watchword for GSA for the legislation.

Mr. WALKER. That relates to the statement you made earlier that there may be a tendency to downgrade and so on, but my question on that is won't that in large part be up to the Congress as well; that Congress in determining funding in the appropriations process will determine that priority be assigned to this function between the agency? Isn't that going to be an aspect of whether or not it succeeds in that?

Mr. LLOYD. I must, again, confess I am not a legislative expert, but I suspect that Congress responds to the amount of money given somehow in direct relation to the emphasis placed there by the agency presenting the budget, and if you have a sincere defendable, justifiable demand by GSA for example, to upgrade this, I think the Congress would be responsive. I don't know that you will find enough interest or community of interest to get Congress to overrule GSA and give them more money because Congress is wiser than GSA.

Mr. WALKER. You had mentioned in your remarks a lend-lease concept in FIC's. Could you describe a little bit how this works and what you are talking about and, for example, are we talking about temporary detail from other Federal agencies? Is that the essence of it?

Mr. LLOYD. My answer is that is the area in which I tried to correct my written notes from what I had learned after. My secretary is not paid. She is my wife, and I could not ask her to do it over again, but by the same token, it was my understanding that when it first started it was a lend-lease, a lend-lease in that like many other programs of which San Francisco FEB was active in, there was a lending of personnel. The salaries continued on. There was a temporary assignment. When things changed or time passed they would go back to their agency, and I really felt when I dictated this that to some degree and that in fact the question I asked of some of the staff was what happens when you go back to your agency and I was informed that they don't go back, they are now GSA employees as such. That is what I had reference to in lend-lease.

Mr. WALKER. Let me just pursue that a little bit because it goes to one of my concerns about this whole concept. I am a cosponsor of the legislation, but there is one concern I have. I can see where there are some problems with the idea of lend-lease and bringing somebody in for a temporary basis and then taking them back out. You mentioned this business of the agency disassociation from the FIC's if they don't have a line responsibility to do something to help them.

I have an even larger concern about it, and that is that the public considers the Federal Government kind of an impersonal operation that does not care about them. My experience as a legislator, as a Congressman in doing what we call casework is that a lot of the problems that are brought to my attention are things which help me in my day-to-day work, as well as in legislation. I sometimes wonder whether or not that isn't the case in some of the Federal agencies, too, and that if we develop the total FIC concept and make it workable, as I hope we could, will this in the long run disassociate some of these agencies even more from the public they serve? All of the problems and all of the public contact will be with one group or a large portion of it, and the agencies themselves will never hear from that public; therefore, they will be kind of out in their own world and only dealing with another branch of Government; namely, the FIC's. If that is happening, wouldn't it be better to have some people on a lend-lease from time to time from some of these agencies into the FIC's to hear what the public is having to say about the problems that they face with Government?

Mr. LLOYD. My answer is this, that the lend-lease as incorporated in my outline referred back to the early days of getting it off of the ground, and certainly we have advanced. The FIC's have come a long way since then. So, there are problems with lend-lease in the sense of being an element of the operation of FIC. If you are proposing to require a retreat or some shot in the arm of bringing in people to see what other people think of their agency, what they are asking, that should be voluntary. It should be independent of the operation in my opinion. I think that you have to have continuity. You cannot have a turnover in the operation of the FIC's. It takes these people a long time to become experts and really knowledgeable. The other side of the same coin is this. You suggest an elite type of staff in GSA that might buttress or shelter and keep away from the other agencies some vital information, vital in the sense that there is criticism or problems or something of that sort. I don't see it to that extent. I don't see a competition between FIC's and the public information officers of Department of Labor or HEW or HUD or any of them. I see a limited responsibility of referral, not of specific answers to questions. The minute they start becoming experts in my office, then I would be right down there complaining to the FIC because that is not their purpose but as a referral to avoid sending someone who wants to buy old gold or sell old gold or trade with Russia which are standard questions that we have, that unfortunate term "trade" in Federal Trade Commission, anything dealing with trade we got inquiries of it. That is the service that they are providing, but it is—and there has to be that type of buttressing.

The fact that they refer by mistake a call over to Food and Drug Administration because we have a parallel type of responsibility, we regulate advertising in Food and Drug and they regulate labeling and other things, that is to be expected, and I don't find that to be a criticism of FIC, but the minute that they start becoming the expert in my enforcement line or any agency's enforcement line I think they have stepped out of line, but I worked with FIC's very closely for at least 6, 7, 8 years after they became operational here. There were times when the FIC's would call my office and say, "We have got a problem. I cannot find it on the spindle. Can you help me?" And being Chairman of the FEB I became very knowledgeable in the line responsibilities of practically every Federal agency in San Francisco, not expert, but knowledgeable. So, I was able to help, and I really did not find any misuse of this centralization of a clearinghouse concept, and I think to offset what you are suggesting, I think the greater advantage is to having a full-time one-to-one agency; namely, GSA.

My caution which gave rise to your question is how do you keep these other agencies feeding it in, and I read your proposed legislation, and it is descriptive of what is, and it does not carry any type of innovative, anything new in the legislation, except create a budget difference, and I don't propose to you or suggest to you that I have any answers on that. I just see that as a problem area of getting that information into the FIC.

I know the girls and the people will go to you. They have done it regularly. So, I am not faulting GSA in that sense, but I don't know what you are going to get on the other end.

Mr. WALKER. Is there any method, whereby we can keep the FIC's innovative and keep their awareness at a peak that gives us an opportunity to get the best possible performance from them?

Mr. LLOYD. Yes; I think that is why I put in the same outline areas and concluded with innovation. I think the minute that you are not aware of the need for this service by downgrading it in salaries or permitting the Civil Service Commission or whoever downgrades, and I forget my Government now, or GSA, for example, downgrading, and you get a lower caliber or less respect for the position related to salary.

Your innovation will come through leadership in GSA. It will come through leadership on your FIC's having people with innovative ideas and having an atmosphere and an organizational relationship where new ideas can be born, the State-Federal type of things. I don't know that you can, this is people we are talking about now, and I don't know that you can legislate innovation, but I think that if you can legislate in a responsive way to recognizing the need and the organization that you are setting up to meet the need and respect that organization by advancements, by salary, by selective employment, by providing for advancement of these people because it seems to me that, and I am not here, please, sir, to talk about personnel or support of the personnel in the FIC's but it is all tied together in this big ball of wax.

It seems to me that there should be mobility. You have developed a class of Government employees that should have mobility out and up because they have knowledge that very few in your office or any other office in Government, the legislative or the executive that has that type of expertise, and there should be some recognition of this. This is primarily GSA's responsibility, I guess. That is the type of encouragement that will breed innovation.

Mr. WALKER. Thank you very much, Mr. Lloyd. I think your testimony has been very useful to the committee as we look into the problem, and we want to thank you for appearing today.

Mr. LLOYD. My pleasure. Thank you.

Mr. WALKER. I would like to call Mr. DiGrazia, please.

As the next witness, Mr. DiGrazia, we welcome you, and we have, I think, copies of your prepared testimony. It will be made a part of the record. You may read through it if you wish or you may do a synopsis of it. We will be pleased to hear anything you have to tell us.

STATEMENT OF JAMES P. DiGRAZIA, DIRECTOR, SAN FRANCISCO AREA OFFICE, U.S. CONSUMER PRODUCT SAFETY COMMISSION

Mr. DIGRAZIA. Thank you and good morning.

I would like to read the statement. I am James P. DiGrazia, director of the San Francisco Area Office of the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission. My office is responsible for implementing CPSC programs in Hawaii, Nevada, and northern California.

I wish to make a few remarks about the San Francisco Federal Information Center operated by the General Services Administration. I speak from experience with the Center in my capacity as CPSC director in this area and as chairman of the San Francisco Federal Executive Board's Consumer Representation Committee.

CPSC interacts with the general public in responding to requests for information about consumer products, providing general safety information and reacting to complaints from citizens.

Due to the small size of my office, one person handles most consumer inquiries directed or referred to the San Francisco area office.

During periods of peak consumer interest or concern my office is easily overtaxed by the quantity of telephone inquiries from the public.

In the past we have called upon the Federal Information Center here in San Francisco to assist us with responding to consumer inquiries during these crisis periods. The most illustrative example was the general public alarm over children's sleepwear treated with a fire retardant chemical Tris. For a period of several weeks in 1977, my office was receiving an average of 50 telephone inquiries a day.

This number would have been even greater had it not been for the assistance provided by the FIC. With the aid of CPSC press release and other reference materials the center was able to handle numerous consumer inquiries concerning Tris.

Asking for the assistance of the FIC's in periods of crisis such as this makes sense to me. It minmizes referrals of consumer inquiries. It takes advantage of the systems and capabilities of the FIC's, and most importantly it enables Government to be fully responsible and responsive to the citizenry. I would hope that the resources provided the Federal Information Center would be sufficient to carry out such a program for Federal agencies which have significant contact with the public.

As a result of the Tris experience we contact the San Francisco FIC whenever we have a situation that is likely to bring a deluge of consumer calls. We have always found the Center fully capable and willing to assist us.

As Chairman of the FEB's Consumer Representation Committee for the past 2 years, I have had direct contact with GSA personnel who operate and oversee the Federal Information Center here in San Francisco.

Approximately 20 Federal agencies are represented on the Consumer Representation Committee which was created to improve Federal communications to the public and enhance public participation in agency decisionmaking.

In 1977, my committee undertook a project to improve the communication between Federal agencies and the FIC. Agencies were asked to identify persons who would be responsible for keeping the FIC up to date on location, personnel, mission, programs, et cetera, and to attend a special briefing on the center in this particular committee's efforts.

Ruth Beadle and Martin Frommiter of GSA presented a briefing in a most effective manner. From the response and enthusiasm of the more than 50 agencies at the briefing, I felt confident that the committee's objectives were met.

A second committee effort involving the FIC occurred in April of this year. The committee sponsored a positive image conference for agency personnel who interact with the public. Again, we followed upon the expertise of Ruth Beadle to instruct the more than 100 conference participants on how to serve the public well with a smile.

The knowledge and skills passed on to the agency representatives were very well received and should enable these persons to do a better job of dealing with the public.

I wish to commend Mary Filippini of GSA for the support standards for these FEB initiatives. She and all the FIC personnel have dealt with, demonstrated commitment to interagency cooperation, an outstanding public service that has been exemplary.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to make these remarks. I shall be glad to answer any questions you may have.

Mr. WALKER. Thank you, again, Mr. DiGrazia. Let me begin by asking you whether you could give us just a little bit of information about your own background for the record.

Mr. DIGRAZIA. Yes, I have 12 years of Government service, about 5 years with the Consumer Product Safety Commission and 7 years with the Food and Drug Administration. Prior to that I worked for the Dow Chemical Co. here in the San Francisco Bay area for 2 years. My formal education consists of graduate work in biology and teaching and a bachelor's degree in physiology from the University of California here in Berkeley.

Mr. Walker. Thank you. You say that you called upon the FIC to assist you in responding to consumer inquiries, especially during crisis periods. When did you first learn of the opportunity to go about helping your own office that way, and how did you learn about that opportunity?

Mr. DiGrazia. Well, I have known of the Federal Information Center as a result of my work in government, and we first called upon the FIC and learned of its capability to assist us in responding to inquiries during our real first consumer crisis associated with the fire retardant chemical Tris that was used in children's pajamas. There was a general public alarm, and we received many, many calls from worried mothers and other people of the general public, and this is the occasion that first led me to the FIC and to call upon their assistance.

Mr. Walker. I want to go a little bit into the procedure, if I could. When do you decide to involve the FIC in an instance like that? Is it volume of phone calls or when is the decision made, and then how do you go about making your contact with them, and what happens after that? Is there any kind of safeguard built into the system that offices simply don't dump their problems over on the FIC? Could you give me a little bit about the process and the procedures on that?

Mr. DiGrazia. Yes. I don't think it is any attempt on our part to get rid of our workload. It is simply a question of the public, anticipating the public reaction. We know that many consumer inquiries are misdirected as a result of whatever. We get many inquiries that come to us that should go to National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Food and Drug Administration, some other agency, so we know that that occurs. Second, we can pretty much——

Mr. Walker. Just let me break in there a minute. Now, when you are saying you get a lot of referrals of that kind, are you talking about the people who call you directly or are you talking about referrals from other Government agencies?

Mr. DiGrazia. No, the former.

Mr. Walker. The people.

Mr. DiGrazia. The public will call us mistakenly thinking that we have this responsibility. So, we kind of anticipate what issue, you know, will bring a heavy avalanche of calls, and we simply call the people at the FIC, drop a press release or some other information that will facilitate them answering the public inquiry that they may receive on this issue, whether it be Tris or some other issue that the Product Safety Commission has responsibility for.

This is how we do it. We call them. We talk to the people over there. We send them information in the mail.

Mr. Walker. You deal directly then with the local FIC office?

Mr. DiGrazia. Yes.

Mr. Walker. And I just wanted to go back for a moment to the point you made previously. When the public is making these calls that are misdirected, what percentage of the calls that you get are—do you have any idea—calls which you cannot handle in your office?

Mr. DiGrazia. Yes, it varies. As a general rule we probably get 1 out of 5 is misdirected.

Mr. Walker. So, 20 percent of the time you are spending on the phone answering inquiries is for inquiries that are not related to your function?

Mr. DiGrazia. That is the general rule of thumb. However, there are certainly occasions where, you know, we get variances from that, for instance, on the recent public concern over the Firestone 500 radial tires, it is greater than 1 out of 5, maybe 1 out of 3 or even higher. So, it varies, but as a general rule of thumb 1 out of 5.

Mr. Walker. You spoke about the Federal Executive Board's Consumer Representation Committee and its work with the San Francisco FIC. We have already heard something about the FEB. It might be helpful for us if you would briefly describe your local FEB organization, how many committees does it have, and what use other FEB committees could make of the FIC's.

Mr. DiGrazia. I am not sure I have given that enough thought to be fully responsive to your question. We have a number of standing committees in the FEB, those that deal with consumer representation, those that deal with public affairs, those that deal with minority business opportunities, those that deal with improved management in the Federal sector, those that are created on an ad hoc basis to implement special programs like the service awards to Government employees for the United Way Campaign and things of this nature. So, I would say from my recollection there are probably six to seven committees dealing with equal employment opportunity, assistance to the aged, those are the ones I can recall.

Mr. Walker. And what you are saying is not all of those would probably have a direct use of the FIC kind of capability? For instance, the awards to employees would probably not have something which would regularly use FIC capabilities. Is that——

Mr. DiGrazia. I am not sure. I would not think it would be as amenable as some of the initiatives and goals that my committee has that are dealing with consumer and the communication processes to the public. This is what led me to the FIC as far as my committee's initiatives were concerned.

Mr. Walker. What exchange or interaction is there between the individual FEB's, and how do you share your problems and their solutions?

Mr. DiGrazia. Well, at one time we had national meetings of the Federal executive boards, but I do not believe the current administration has continued that practice, and that was one avenue of sharing experience in programs from one FEB to the other.

Right now we are pretty much restricted with regard to national meetings. So, we have to rely on communications from one FEB to the other as a result of some informal channel that is used or some communication out of OMB that they feel warrants our attention.

Mr. Walker. I would assume that Consumer Product Safety Commission offices all over the country would be experiencing the kind of special crisis situations that you described to us. Have you advised your central office of the cooperation you got from the FIC's in this regard, and do you know of any action that is going on to make this a countrywide sort of process, the use of the FIC's by——

Mr. DiGrazia. I do discuss my activities and my association with the FIC's here in San Francisco with my superiors. I don't really know if this has been communicated to other CPSC area offices or what they are doing in this regard.

Mr. WALKER. Do you see any particular problems with the Centers as they are operated today? Do you have any suggestions as to how they might be improved?

Mr. DIGRAZIA. Well, one of the problems that I see is the location. They probably could be located in a better area to facilitate productivity, perhaps out of the mainstream there.

Mr. WALKER. OK, and have you taken a look at the bill that we are considering here?

Mr. DIGRAZIA. I have not had an opportunity to see it.

Mr. WALKER. OK. Thank you very much. We appreciate your testimony.

We will ask the first panel to come forward again and we will continue with them. I have some questions here which the staff has prepared, but I wanted to pursue with you just a little bit something that strikes me as interesting from my standpoint, and I hope it is interesting as far as the committee record goes, as well.

Most of us in congressional office think of ourselves kind of as service centers for our constituents, too. We maintain district office staffs and we provide a kind of information center. I would like a comment from each of you as to where you see that the FIC's perform a service different from the congressional office function in this regard. And is there cooperation between you and the local congressional offices on this kind of information for the public? You can just start right across the table, if you want.

Mr. SNAIDER. We have two congressional offices in our building, and generally the way I would see the distinction between the types of service we provide is that if people are looking for information about government or the type of assistance that "I have not been able to find the right person to talk to," then certainly we can help them. But when they are dealing with an agency, and they have dealt with it correctly and the agency is still not responding, then we do not have the authority to go into that office and say, "Do it right this time," whereas a congressional office can go in and intercede. That is not our function.

Our congressional offices do use us all the time and do refer people to us directly. When it is simply an informational request. So we work back and forth.

Mr. WALKER. What you are saying is that you refer people to congressional offices if they have come up against a brick wall.

Mr. SNAIDER. Hardly ever. If a person comes with a problem, we will try to assist him, basically no matter what the problem is. If it gets to the point that we are running into the same brick wall and we have reached the end of the rope, then we do not tell them to go to their representative, because we simply can say that other people have found that it could have been resolved by going to their representative. We can make the suggestion to them, but we certainly will not take them up. We feel that that would be an intrusion on the relationship. But we do make it known to them that that is one of their options.

Mr. WALKER. OK, thank you.

Ms. TIRRE. I would like to say that we specialize in information, whereas I think the activities in a congressional office are far more than that. They are dealing with a lot of problems and a lot of different subjects. We are specialists on information, and we find in Los Angeles that many times a congressional office is looking for some information and will call us for it, in order to answer a constituent's inquiry.

Mr. WALKER. What you are saying is that your function is different from what we call our casework function.

Mr. SNAIDER. Yes.

Mr. WALKER. Where we are pursuing a social security problem for someone, your function would be to tell somebody how to get hold of the Social Security Agency to resolve the problem, or where to get particular information about social security that they might need because they are looking into getting medicare next week or something like that. That is the difference?

Mr. SNAIDER. Right. I do not think that the congressional staff, busy as they are, have the time to run down all the information on the requests they get. And it is certainly helpful to them to have some place to either call us themselves or have the person call us to get that type of information. It saves them a lot of time, that they are really not supposed to be there to do.

Mr. WALKER. Thank you.

Ms. PUGH. In my center in San Diego we find basically the same thing that Evelyn has in Los Angeles, with the exception that many of the personnel of the congressional offices call us for the information relative to other levels of government. It is a central place where they can get this information immediately, rather than trying to keep their own liaison with the other levels.

Ms. BEADLE. I concur with the other ladies. In our particular instance, for instance, when we have an immigrant who has a very complex question and he has not been helped quite appropriately by the Immigration, or it was a conflict matter between the Immigration and the State Department—because most of the public does not know where the Immigration starts and ends and where the State Department takes over—we found it was very helpful to send somebody to the Congressman's office, to the Immigration specialist caseworker, and they are able to take it up. And then they come by and say, "Oh, it was great. They helped me."

Mr. WALKER. You said you send the immigration problems to the congressional office. Those are the toughest problems to solve, you realize. [Laughter.]

Ms. BEADLE. No, but for the record I want to make it clear that we do not send people unless it is a very specific case where we know that the people are trapped between two facets of government.

Mr. WALKER. Sure. Before I ran for Congress, I served on the congressional staff for 10 years, and I remember many of the headaches with immigration problems as being the most serious ones we faced. So I can understand the problem.

Do any of you know—and I ask this because it might help us when it comes to the process of trying to get approval of this legislation in the Congress—have any of you heard comments or maybe are personally familiar with how the congressional offices react to the service that you are providing, and whether or not this did in fact take some of the burden of providing information off their backs? Now, in my district we do not have a Federal Information Center. The closest one would be Philadelphia, but that really does not serve my district. Therefore, my congressional office basically does serve as the information center. We get dozens of phone calls each day which are simply a request, sometimes for just a telephone number. You know, "Can you give me the telephone number of the local Social Security Office," that sort of thing. And it ties up a lot of staff time.

Have you heard or do you know from the offices whether or not this is something which takes some of that kind of burden off those staffs? That would be a big selling point to a lot of my colleagues, I think, for the Federal Information Center concept.

Ms. Beadle. We started here 10 years ago in San Francisco, and the impact was immediate, and we were congratulated by the Congressmen's officers for alleviating their heavy call-ins. So I thought we got really good response, and we were congratulated for doing a good job.

Mr. Walker. That, I would think, would help cement the cooperative arrangement between the offices.

Ms. Beadle. Yes, and we do cooperate with each other. When we have a complex problem we call them up and say, "Can you help us with this particular problem," and we outline it, and they say, "Yes, we are able. Send them up or give us a call," because some of the Congressmen are in outlying areas. So we have a very good rapport. We help each other. We are not in competition in any way.

Mr. Walker. This is just a kind of ancillary question, and we will get back to the basic one, but do you have contact people, then, such as the congressional offices have within the Federal agencies, that you go to?

Ms. Beadle. Oh, yes.

Mr. Walker. In other words, you have specific people that you call within the agencies, much like we have congressional liaisons?

Ms. Beadle. Yes; we have a very good rapport.

Mr. Walker. OK, thank you.

Ms. Pugh. I have several letters from different Congressmen and from Senators, too—as a matter of fact, offers to testify, if you get down to San Diego—about our relationship and how they depend upon us.

Mr. Walker. Fine. Thank you.

Ms. Tirre. When Senator Hayakawa and Representative Dornan were reelected in the Los Angeles area, I made it a point to call on them and offer any kind of assistance. They were very happy to have that, because they were beginning a new staff that was not familiar with the area or what they were going to face, so they were delighted to know that there was a place that they could go and get information about Government.

Ms. Filippini. Mr. Walker, as the Supervisor of the Center I have often received letters, and so have my predecessors, about the work that the Centers have done, from the congressional staff people. It is not uncommon to have this rapport between the congressional district office staffs and the Federal Information Centers throughout the region here.

Mr. Walker. So from your standpoint it is a fairly general kind of pattern, what is being described here.

Ms. FILIPPINI. I believe it is. I do handle some congressional relations work for the region here in our regional office, and I have found that a lot of people that I deal with in the district office staffs are very familiar with the Federal Information Centers, and have nothing but very good words to say about the service they have received there and the rapport that they have with the staffs.

Mr. SNAIDER. We have received, in Sacramento, the specific type of answer that you were mentioning and they have mentioned. We have congressional staffs who were there before we opened, and their reactions are similar to those of the other offices in Sacramento that were there before we opened that are still there. That is, that the change was enormous, that we started handling more and more of these calls that simply did not belong with them. Now, they do not know what they would do without us. They really do not.

Mr. WALKER. OK, thank you. That kind of hits at the things that were on my mind. Let me proceed to some of the things to get on the record. I will try to cover some of the questions.

If I could, Ms. Filippini, what I would like to do is lead off with some specific questions for you, of more of a general nature, and then go on to some questions for the panel as a whole. Can you give us just a little description of your background, for our record, please?

Ms. FILIPPINI. Yes; I have been working with GSA since 1970, originally in Washington, D.C., with the National Archives. I came out here to the region in 1976 to work as a staff assistant with the then regional administrator, Tom Hannon. I took the job with the Regional Federal Information Center Coordinator here in region 9 last January, so I have been in the position I am currently in for the past 6 months.

Mr. WALKER. Are you the only FIC coordinator at a regional level for GSA?

Ms. FILIPPINI. Yes; in the sense that my position is probably the only formal position in the regions, wherein my salary is paid out of the budget of the Federal Information Centers. The Federal Information Centers in the other regions generally come under the responsibilities and authorities of the Office of Business Affairs. However, I do not believe that any other regions have a formal position such as mine. So this is a unique situation out here.

I would add that this is one of the areas that GSA would like to see, and the Federal Information Center program nationally would like to see expanded, in the sense of having a regional coordinator in all of the regions for the Federal Information Centers.

Mr. WALKER. I would assume that, if we get the kind of legislation that is proposed in the Congress, the pattern that would be followed would be to put regional coordinators in force in other areas, similar to the kind of job that you are now performing. At least, that would seem to be my concept of the intent, anyhow.

Can you describe for us the manual retrieval system used by the California Centers?

Ms. FILIPPINI. That we use in the California Centers?

Mr. WALKER. Yes.

Ms. FILIPPINI. Basically, there are two sections, the Flexaline, which is a manual listing that is in a relatively cumbersome type of rotary system that the staff uses, that is set up in a subject category area. In addition to that, the subjects are divided down into Federal, State, and local government sections. This is probably the mainstay of the centers as far as the information is concerned.

In addition to that, they have their Roladex system, which contains information that is not that frequently used that it would necessitate being put into the Flexaline system. Now, there are numerous other sources that the Federal Information Center staffs have on hand. They include volumes of books and directories that the Government puts out, that nongovernment agencies put out. There are files, information files that each center will collect on their own, consisting of reports that they have found helpful to them from different Federal agencies, or listings of local personnel in Federal agencies, bits and pieces from newspapers, magazine articles, almost any kind of scrapbook source they can get their hands on, that they can keep in subject files.

Mr. WALKER. So what you are saying is that this manual would not be the same for each FIC?

Ms. FILIPPINI. Yes, it is the same for each FIC as far as the mainstay, the basic information sources, are concerned. Every FIC does have a Flexaline and a Roladex, and the system is the same. The information is not necessarily the same in the centers, because they basically have to be attuned to their local area and region. The core information is, of course, as far as the organization of the Federal Government and the main breakdown of agencies. However, the names of their local contacts and local agencies, of course, will vary from center to center.

Mr. WALKER. You heard my question earlier about whether or not there is shared information as far as topics that get hot in one place, and whether or not that gets disseminated to other places. Does that take place within the region?

Ms. FILIPPINI. It does take place on a national level, as well as a regional level. Basically, it is done on a national level, since Federal programs usually are nationwide rather than regional. This is done through our system set up by Washington, wherein center managers do contact our Washington office, and the staff there then disseminates through the form of a Federal Information Center Bulletin this vital information to all the centers throughout the country.

Mr. WALKER. But are you required to go back to the national level? What I am thinking is, for instance, you might have a disaster that strikes a whole region, and all of a sudden you would have a need for a lot of information that would pertain to the region only, and would not necessarily have national impact. Are you able to include information for everyone within the region without going back to the home office?

Ms. FILIPPINI. Yes; I have found since I have been in the job that the four center managers here in California have known one another for a long time; they all started with their centers. They appear to be very good at keeping each other informed when they come across vital bits of information, either by telephoning the others or by sending memos back and forth, copies of which do come through my office. So they have been very good about keeping each other informed when there are statewide crises or regional crises that they feel another center may be getting calls on.

Mr. **Walker.** You say that the Flexaline is cumbersome. Is there any way that that can be overcome?

Ms. **Filippini.** I have looked a little bit into the information sources that they have in the center, very cursorily, I would say. In my opinion I think there is probably going to have to be a jump, if we are to get out of the Flexaline system, into something highly automated. Of course, this would be far down the road and it would have to be examined greatly on a national level, because the automation would more than likely take place on a national level, because there is a good bit of information that is disseminated out of Washington, out of the regional office, and of course, assimilated locally.

Flexalines are the best we have at this point.

Mr. **Walker.** When you say automation, are you talking about computerization?

Ms. **Filippini.** Computerization, yes.

Mr. **Walker.** It has been suggested that other Federal agencies from time to time send personnel to the FIC's to observe and serve on a lend-lease basis. You have heard the concerns I expressed earlier. One of my real concerns is that this may somehow separate out other Federal agencies and the FIC will become a buffer for them between the agencies and the public at large. What do you think of the lend-lease concept?

Ms. **Filippini.** I really do not believe that the situation is causing any problem. The FIC's do have a liaison with the other Federal agencies. This is done at all levels. We have national liaison people in Washington that deal with problems directly with the agencies, the central offices of the agencies in Washington. When a problem arises in a region that appears to be experienced nationwide, the Federal Information Center coordinator's office will approach the agency and attempt to solve it.

On the regional level, we do a lot of agency contact and coordination, as Mr. DiGrazia explained to you, through the Federal Executive Board. On the individual center level, these center managers spend a lot of time in liaison work with the various Federal agencies in their area. They are fully aware of what the agencies' limitations are and the type of information they wish disseminated to the public. They are fully aware of the complexity of some of the agencies' programs, and that they do not often have the expertise to answer these questions, and have been able to ascertain a person or an area within the different agencies to refer these calls to. They do not take it upon themselves to answer very technical questions that they know they do not have the expertise to answer.

We are very responsive to the Federal agencies, I feel, in the sense that we are told, "Please don't answer these questions. Refer them to us," and it is done that way.

Mr. **Walker.** I guess my concern, though, is the next step in the process. That is to step out into the public. I am concerned about these agencies over here. You see, the way this process works is that you have Government employees talking to Government employees about the problems within the agency, rather than the public talking to Government employees, other than FIC employees, about the problem. And I am wondering if the kind of splendid isolation that takes place for the agencies is good.

The public perception of all of this, it seems to me, is one more layer of isolation away from them, or at least it could become that. Or in the more popular lexicon, the idea that it is bureaucrats dealing with bureaucrats, and "The only people that I talk to are the people at the FIC."

Once we mandate this, once we put it into law, once we structure it into government, I am wondering if the agencies themselves will not find it far more comfortable to deal with FIC's rather than dealing with the public. And somehow here we will establish another tier. How do we prevent the agencies from utilizing that kind of system in the future? Am I getting across my concern?

Ms. FILIPPINI. Yes; I understand. I really feel that I do not perceive that as a danger. I feel that there are so many Federal programs that are dealing with very complex issues, that the Federal Information Centers will always have to be in the referral business, in the sense of knowing who to contact in the agency and being able to refer the public to that person. I do not think that they will be cutting out the agencies as far as dealing on a one-to-one with the public, because there is no way that the centers could have a complete grasp of the immediate programs of every single Federal agency and the implementation of these programs.

Mr. WALKER. OK, I grant you that. I guess my point is—and maybe this does not happen to you, but I deal with it from the congressional perspective again—that a lot of people, having called the FIC or having called the congressional office, get what they want to say off their chest and probably never follow through at that point. You know, if they get a little bit of information from you or if they call in and they are irate and they say something like, "Is there anything that can be done about this?" and you say, "Yes; here is what you can do about it," I would guess that a large percentage of the callers don't even follow through on it. At that point they have kind of gotten it off their chest; they have made their point to somebody. And I sometimes wonder if it would not be good for the agencies themselves to be hearing this from the very start, so that they get it off their chest with the people who maybe are really responsible for the problem.

Ms. FILIPPINI. Instead of going through the type of liaison——

Mr. WALKER. Instead of having the buffer of the congressional office in my case, or the FIC in your case. Am I wrong in the kind of calls you get? I see some heads shaking yes.

Ms. FILIPPINI. I am sure they all have different experiences with Federal agencies and this whole issue of being a buffer. I personally see it as a very good thing, in the sense that very often the public does not know who to get this off their chest to, and we are someone they can contact. They know the number. It is in the phone book. It is advertised. They can get to us immediately when the problem is immediate to them. And it becomes very frustrating to them if they have to attempt to find out through the maze without the Federal Information Center who to yell at and who to complain to. Because very often they cannot find that information in phone books, or simply do not know what agency or what person is responsible for their plight or whatever, whereas they can immediately call the Federal Information Center and get a very sympathetic ear.

Mr. **Walker**. Yes; and that is fine. That is fine. And I think that personalizes government to great extent. I think that is good. But you see. where it goes from there is that you in turn get ahold of the agency. Now, at that point the persons themselves with the problem or with the complaint and so on is not getting ahold of the agency. At that point it is the FIC getting ahold of the agency, which comes, I guess, down to the final part of the problem, which is, do you think that those agencies can really understand what you are doing and what you are hearing without actually at some point having some people within that agency come out and see what is happening and hear what is happening in your center?

Ms. **Filippini**. That would be a very good thing for them to do. I think every bureaucrat in this country ought to spend 1 day in the Federal Information Center. It would certainly turn many of them around as far as dealing with the public.

Mr. **Walker**. That gets down, I think, to the bottom line of my point; that we cannot afford that kind of isolation. And what we are saying on the lend-lease is, would it not be valuable from time to time to have some of these people come out and see, on a regular basis, what is happening in your centers?

Ms. **Filippini**. They are invited to, in the sense that the center managers, in their contact and liaison with specific people that they work with in the Federal agencies, do very often invite them to come down and see the operation, to sit there behind the desks, listening to the phone calls that come in or to the general public that walks in.

Mr. **Walker**. How many of them take advantage of that opportunity?

Ms. **Filippini**. Unfortunately, probably not enough. However, I believe some of the work we can do with the Federal Executive Boards will increase this. Mr. DiGrazia mentioned the conference we held here in San Francisco that generated a great deal of interest on the part of the public information officers in the various Federal agencies, and they literally swarmed down to the San Francisco center to see what was going on.

Mr. **Walker**. Mr. Chairman?

Mr. **Burton**. Go right ahead. I am sorry that I had to leave, but when you are having hearings in your own district you end up with God knows what. Why don't you continue.

Mr. **Walker**. All right. The FIC Washington coordinator has provided a copy of the final draft of the FIC handbook. I understand that the centers are now operating under a similar kind of draft. Does each center in region 9 have that draft of the handbook, and do you happen to know when the handbook will be finally issued?

Ms. **Filippini**. All the center managers have seen a copy of the final draft on that. From what I understand in speaking with them, the draft was corrected in any form or commented on by them and returned to Washington. However, they have read a number of drafts on the handbook cover to cover, and are aware of what is contained in the handbook.

As far as a specific date when the handbook will be ready, I am afraid I really cannot give you that information. We do expect it shortly, however. I am assuming, by shortly, that Washington is envisioning them coming out this summer. As far as I know, the handbook is ready to be printed or in the process of being printed right now.

Mr. Walker. And as far as you know, among your center managers and so on, there is no real controversy about the handbook?

Ms. Filippini. They have all had time and have been given the opportunity to comment on the handbook, and Washington has gone through the comments. Of course, I cannot say whether they agree with everything that is in there.

Mr. Walker. We will have to ask them later.

Ms. Filippini. As to what their opinion of the handbook is. But generally, I think that Washington was carefully taking a look at the comments from the 38 centers, and making the corrections that they felt viable.

Mr. Walker. Are you taking any particular initiatives in region 9 to train other agency personnel in the FIC role and its use? This kind of goes back to what we were talking about a little bit earlier. Have you instituted any procedures that would help other agencies understand what it is you do?

Ms. Filippini. As Mr. DiGrazia pointed out to you, we have worked through the FEB on two major conferences, one with the public information officers which was very well received, and another with the secretary-receptionist people in the various Federal agencies, who have direct contact with the public. And again, that was an exceptionally well-received program. The Federal Information Center manager here in San Francisco did present a summary of her program and what her people do, how they do it, how the Federal agencies can use her services as a clearinghouse and can be of assistance to them.

We hope to continue this kind of work through the FEB, and I do hope to initiate some work with the other Federal executive boards and councils throughout the region.

Mr. Walker. How about your own new personnel? Do you have a program to train them when they come on board in an FIC, and then do you have programs to upgrade personnel who have been on board for some time?

Ms. Filippini. Each individual center manager is responsible for the training of their staff, and they do go through a very extensive training period with the manager when new people do come on. The training is outlined in the handbook, and I am sure is generally the same as far as the type of steps that the new employee is put through in learning how to take inquiries at the information center.

Mr. Walker. Can you tell me the total number of personnel that you have working in region 9 FIC's?

Ms. Filippini. In individual centers. I could if I had an adding machine here. I am going to guess there is about 20 to 25. That may be a little high.

Mr. Walker. OK. Would you provide for us, for the record—we do not expect you to have the information here—the number, and include with that a breakdown of their length of service, and their salary grades.

Ms. Filippini. Of each member of the staff?

Mr. Walker. Yes, of each of the people who work on the staff of the FIC's in the region. I would appreciate it if you would do that for our record, please.

I would also like you to summarize the steps being taken in region 9 Center cities to provide information to the public about the Centers and their function. How do you work with the telephone companies about getting listings and notices and this kind of thing?

Ms. FILIPPINI. We have a good relationship with the phone company here in California, and have found them very willing to assist us in any way they can, and of bettering the listings that they have. Of course, one of the other sections of GSA is the ADTS, which handles our telecommunications, and they are responsible for all Government phone listings. We do also work with our people in ADTS on establishing better phone listings. As Warren mentioned in his opening statement, the blue page experiment has come to Sacramento, and we are now in the process of working with the telephone company in improving, greatly improving, the Government listings in the phone book, and to the sense of putting them into a separate section.

Mr. WALKER. What about the business of letting the public know how they go about getting ahold of FIC's? Do you have some means of public service advertising on radio? How do you go about getting the word to the public about contacting FIC's if they have a Federal Government question?

Ms. FILIPPINI. A number of years ago there were public service announcements done on a national basis and sent out to the various Centers for distribution to the television and radio stations. Some of the problems our Centers have had with these is that very often they were not regionalized enough, in the sense that the individual Center and the individual area was not stressed. We have not had an extensive campaign as far as the advertising of the Centers is concerned, because of the number of problems we have experienced in the Centers. Right now I see in the Centers we have here in California that an extensive campaign at this time would overload the system. We have had a number of staff problems and staffing imbalances in the Center. We have been moving most of the centers from a lobby to an off-lobby position, and had not found it opportune to do extensive advertising.

However, once these problems are solved and the Centers are in solid working shape and can handle more advertising, it would be done, in the form of public service announcements, basically. On the other hand, our Center managers, many have a good rapport with the press in the area, and have been able to drum up a lot of advertising on their own in the form of articles in the newspaper. Many of them go out and make speeches to private groups, to local government groups, advertising the services of their Center. And this they have all found, I am sure, very helpful in generating a lot of business and spreading the word that this does exist and can help the public.

Mr. WALKER. In your opinion, should the grade levels of California FIC employees be upgraded?

Ms. FILIPPINI. Yes. I firmly believe that the grade levels that the Centers currently have do not reflect the tremendous job these people are doing, and the scope of information and skill that is required for an information specialist in these areas. Right now, they are classified as information receptionists, which I do not feel reflects the true job they are doing. They are actually specialists in the field of information, in the field of Government information, and I do firmly believe that the grade structure is far lower than it should be.

Mr. WALKER. Fine. And then, one final question. What about the people who call into the Centers who have little or no English language capability, or where it is evident that they have speech or hearing impediments? Do you have the capabilities to deal with those kinds of situations in your Centers?

Ms. FILIPPINI. Almost all of the Centers—I would say all of the Centers in this region, and I am sure nationally—do have some bilingual capability. I believe all our Centers here do have a Spanish capability, because there is such a great Spanish-speaking population in the area. As far as unusual foreign languages, foreign-language speakers that they may come in contact with, all the Centers have pretty much on their own managed to cope with the situation as it arises, in the sense that when someone does come in who speaks Swahili they will find someone who can help them in the Federal community.

They have excellent contacts with the Federal agencies and know a lot of foreign-language speakers in the different departments within their building, and have built up a rapport with these people and find it relatively easy to call upon their services in translation. And if it becomes impossible, I guess they just use the old method of signaling in order to get a point across. But certainly foreign-language speakers are not ignored. They are given very excellent attention.

Mr. WALKER. What about the people with handicaps? I mentioned them, too. Speech and hearing handicaps, something like that. If you have someone who evidently has that kind of problem, is a special attempt made to deal with them? Do you have capabilities for doing that?

Ms. FILIPPINI. In the sense that these center staff members are all a very special breed of people, and they are very sensitive. It is a job that you need a great deal of sensitivity in. And I find in visiting the centers that all of these people do have this compassion and this sensitivity, and they do naturally and innately take a lot of special time and attention to help people with difficulties through their difficulties, be they communication difficulties because of a handicap or language or whatever.

Mr. WALKER. OK, thank you very much. Now I am going to pursue a few questions with the members of the panel, as well. First of all, would each of you give us a little idea of your background prior to assuming the direction of the center?

Mr. SNAIDER. I started working for the Government in the information center this time. Prior to that, I served in the Army and I worked as a postal employee. I have a bachelor's degree in French from Stanford.

Ms. TIRRE. I am a native Montanan. I started to work with the Government many, many years ago with the U.S. Foreign Service in Missoula, Mont. During World War II I came to California to work on a crash program which you might have heard of, called the guayule program, trying to get a natural source of rubber. And from the Agriculture Department I went to the Treasury Department, and from the Treasury Department to the Federal Aviation Administration in the Transportation Department, from there to the National Bureau of Standards, from there to the Corps of Engineers, and finally to GSA.

Mr. WALKER. You were a source person before you came to the Federal Information Centers.

Ms. TIRRE. Well, I guess that helped.

Ms. PUGH. I originated—in 1960 the city of San Diego decided they wanted a combination city and county information center, so they asked me if I would initiate this, which I did. And we continued that, and that was fully sponsored and paid for by the city of San Diego until 1971. At that time the Federal Information, GSA, came in, and they wanted to have a Federal Information Center. They talked with the city fathers, and we combined it into a Government Information Center.

You spoke about lend-lease bodies. I have had experience in that. When I first started I had a State body and a county body and a city body and a Federal body. I was the city body at that time. If they are working in a center, you have no control over different levels of government, with their vacation days, with their training days, with their different hours. So we found that it was better that GSA assume the responsibility of running the whole center.

That was in 1971, and we are still there, although we did drop out the county. It is now only State and city.

Mr. WALKER. Thank you.

Ms. BEADLE. I am German by birth, British by marriage, and American by choice. I am a German Jewish refugee, and went to England, and from there I proceeded to Guatemala, Central America, to rejoin my family after a long 10-years separation, and I picked up Spanish. I learned French in Switzerland in boarding school prior to the Hitler movement taking over Germany entirely. And I came to the United States 25 years ago.

And I was lucky enough to become an American citizen, and then I became a Government employee and I worked for the Department of Labor, the Wage and Hour Division, for 9 years. Then I was very fortunate to have been selected out of 125 applicants by Mr. Ireland here as one of the Federal Information specialists. That was our title at the time, the 1081 series, and I am still there. I am the last one left. I graduated to become the manager, and I am tremendously proud of doing this job.

Mr. WALKER. With your background, I do not know why you would refer any immigration problems to a congressional office.

Ms. BEADLE. I know the difference—when you immigrate you start with the Department of State and then it goes into the immigration problem, and I am very conversant with it because I tried to come to the United States three times and I was rejected twice.

Mr. WALKER. I am glad you made it.

Ms. BEADLE. Thank you, sir.

Mr. WALKER. Would each of you review briefly how you think your center differs from the other centers that operate with you in the region? What are the unique features of your individual centers?

Mr. SNAIDER. Perhaps in Sacramento it can be summed up by the fact that unlike the other centers we are serving basically a small town. Sacramento is viewed as the State capital, but it really is a farm town. And our approach has to be different with people. In addition, since we are not in a regional city we do not have a Federal executive board or agency. We do not have that kind of backup. So we are constantly dealing with agencies in other cities. Most of the agencies we deal with are in San Francisco. Some are in Los Angeles. Some are in Washington only.

So because of that, we have had to develop different kinds of contacts. We find that we are doing more of the research for the public in certain types of questions than would be done in a city where the agencies themselves were found.

Ms. TIRRE. Los Angeles is in the center of 8 million population that depends more or less on the Los Angeles area for information about government. There are two things, I think, that make Los Angeles unique. That is the far-flung size of it. Whenever anyone calls into our center, the first thing we have to do is ask them, "Where are you calling from," because we try to get them to the nearest office that can serve them.

Second, we are not a regional city, and because we are not we probably have to provide more direct information about, say, things like education grants, et cetera, things that people ask a lot about, and yet the offices are in San Francisco and are not represented at all in Los Angeles.

Ms. PUGH. We are one step down the road from Evelyn. In Ruth's center she has regional offices. In Evelyn's center, she normally has a field office. In San Diego, we have shelves. There are not very many offices in San Diego. So therefore, our files must include, when we are talking about these cumbersome Flexalines that we are using, our files must include the regional and the field office in Los Angeles, and perhaps there is a one-man office in San Diego. So there are three listings that we would have to have, where perhaps Ruth would need her regional one, and perhaps Evelyn would need the two.

And of course, we are a Government Information Center, and we are listed in the telephone book under California State and under the city of San Diego. We have to have the in-depth listings of all these governments. We also put out this little booklet. You asked how we are different. I think we are the only one that puts this out. You also asked in publicity, how we reached the public. In the front of it, if you will notice, we have the Representatives, and try to aid them in getting to the public, their direct field office numbers, too.

Mr. WALKER. The book, is that distributed through your Center, or was it distributed to each citizen in the area? How is it disseminated?

Ms. PUGH. How is it distributed? It is distributed through the fire department, the housing inspection office, the police department, through all of the governmental agencies, through the libraries. We have sent boxes to realtors, who come in and pick up boxes to send out to the developers. Through the various State agencies.

Mr. WALKER. Very good.

Ms. BEADLE. As Marie said, the San Francisco Federal Information Center is in the regional city, so they have all the regional offices here. And the other uniqueness here is that we are in a cosmopolitan area here, and everything is very concise. Our civic center has the city government and the State government and everything is sort of right around the corner, so to speak. We get a lot of foreign people in our building, because of the nature of being a cosmopolitan city.

Mr. WALKER. How important do each of you regard newspapers as sources of information? What newspapers do you receive in your office, and would you comment on newspapers that you would like to get, and also on the clipping service that you get out of Washington. That is a pretty broad range, but I would just like to get your responses to that series.

Mr. SNAIDER. We could not exist without our newspapers, because the people out there are reading them, and when they phone up for something that they have seen on page 25 of today's Sacramento Bee, you had better be able to get the same article, because often they will not make clear what it is they are talking about.

We get a subscription to the Sacramento Bee, and I subscribe to the San Francisco Chronicle. We also, in ways of newspapers—I do not know whether you call the Federal Register a newspaper, but we have a subscription to that, as well.

Mr. WALKER. What would you like to get that you are not now getting?

Mr. SNAIDER. I do not know, because in our building we have access to other newspapers. We do not go through them, but the U.S. attorney's office does now receive a subscription to the Los Angeles Times and the New York Times and the Washington Post. So if there were a newsstory breaking that we felt would be more adequately covered in one of those papers instead——

Mr. WALKER. How about weekly newspapers? I am not familiar enough with the area to know whether or not you have a large circulation weekly newspaper, but in my district the weekly newspapers are probably better read than the daily newspapers are.

Mr. SNAIDER. No; we have free advertising sheets in Sacramento, but they are not widely read and do not cover the kinds of news that people ordinarily call us about.

Ms. TIRRE. In Los Angeles we read the Los Angeles Times, the Los Angeles Herald Examiner, and the Register from Orange County, because we have a tieline with that area, and we like to keep up with that. If we were able to receive delivery fast enough from other parts of the country, I would really like the New York Times and possibly the Washington Post.

I think that the lag in mail time between Washington and the west coast is detrimental to getting current information.

Mr. WALKER. What about your clipping service?

Ms. TIRRE. You are talking about the service that our central office provides?

Mr. WALKER. Yes; that the central office provides to you.

Ms. TIRRE. We find in many cases that we have already gotten that information more quickly from other sources, because of the lag in the mail time.

Ms. PUGH. I feel the same way. The clipping service coming to us is about a week late. As Warren said, we have already received the questions the day that it appears in the newspaper, or the next day, and we must research it. And actually, each one of us individually are researching throughout the country for the answers that come to us a little later.

I only receive one paper, one subscription. I was receiving the Los Angeles Times, but that was cut down to the one. I would like to have that, because our San Diego paper is very one sided, and we do not get all the news.

Ms. BEADLE. We buy our newspaper, the San Francisco Chronicle, on a daily basis, because our subscription was stopped. Now, we are a little unique in the sense that we do not have any inside offices, and therefore we are not allowed to read the newspaper in the booth downstairs. Because if we were to read the newspaper, people would say, "They have nothing to do. All they do is read the newspaper all day." So that is absolutely out. What we do is that I listen to the radio from the moment I wake up until I leave my home, and that is where I get my information. And that has been invaluable. So that I knew there was an earthquake in Guatemala and whatever catastrophe, and I would pick up a pencil and pad, which I have all over, in order to jot down the telephone number, and then I would run into the office and say, "Here, we have to check this out immediately so that we can handle the influx of calls," and it has been terrific. We do not have time to read the newspaper. I read it after work, and I take it home. But I hope that will change when we are in the new location.

Mr. WALKER. How do you make suggestions or special information known to your supervisors and to the Washington office? And do you feel that Washington has been responsive or reactive to your reports?

Mr. SNAIDER. I have seen a change in the Washington office. There was a time when we would send things and I did believe that they were being filed. You mentioned the handbook. The first draft of the handbook, for example, I had some rather pointed things to say about, and many of my comments were incorporated in the final draft. So it was quite clear that they were taking a look at what we had to say.

Mr. WALKER. Are you reasonably satisfied about the final draft?

Mr. SNAIDER. Yes; I still, of course, have some disagreements, but there is no way to eliminate 38 people from having disagreements with any document.

Mr. WALKER. Sure.

Mr. SNAIDER. As far as how we get things out, Mary was talking about it earlier, in that when a new program arises that would be of only regional interest, what we generally do is simply send a memo around to the Information Centers affected. If it appears that it would be of national interest, then I would either send a memo to Washington or include it in the monthly report. And information from those is picked up and then sent back out again. I have also called with information to the Washington office, to tell them that something new was breaking.

Mr. WALKER. Are there any other comments?

Ms. TIRRE. I had the privilege of working on that manual, after all the comments came in from all the centers, and I will go on record as saying that we gave very much consideration to all comments by each center in the country. They really were heard.

We do send a lot of information to Washington through our regional office each month in the narrative report. And I agree with Warren. I think there has been a lot of improvement on feedback, and a lot more attention paid to it now, because they have the staff. At one time they were very limited in staff, and could only do so much.

Mr. WALKER. Do any or many of your centers have automatic call directors at your disposal?

Ms. TIRRE. I do.

Mr. Walker. You do?

Ms. Tirre. Yes.

Mr. Walker. What about the rest?

Ms. Pugh. No. That is one of the frustrating parts of our Center. When the girls are answering the phones and trying to concentrate, more phones are ringing, and they forget to put their finger out to push a certain little button that will throw that call into a Codaphone, and consequently it will ring and ring until somebody says, "Push the button." It is very distracting. And the Codaphone breaks down constantly.

Ms. Beadle. Yes; and may I add that it is very limited. While you are pushing the button, other calls are coming in, and you cannot put them on hold until the end of the recording, and we have kept the recording to the minimum, but you still have to say to the people whom they are calling. So it is not really serving its purpose. And it is very true, the Codaphone has been breaking down a tremendous lot.

Mr. Walker. You need a gentleman from Consumer Products.

Ms. Filippini. Could I add that our Washington office is working on getting automatic call directors in all the Centers. They are doing this right now on a priority basis. LA is one of the larger Centers handling a great deal of calls, and of course are one of the first on the list to get the automatic call director. Hopefully, all the Centers will have it. It is just a matter of time.

Mr. Walker. OK; are there any other equipment needs that you see in your Centers?

Ms. Pugh. Other than, as Mary said, in the far, far future. But right now, immediately, I imagine with Evelyn's case, too, but in my case I have six of these big Flexalines that we have to type. The typist sits down. She types one strip. She types two. She types six strips, all the same. In the six different strips she can make mistakes. She has to proofread them. If we had a memory typewriter of some sort, she could type one strip and then it would go on and do the other six. But I think there is some regulation regionally that we cannot have any word-processing equipment. This would be time effective. I have sent in justification on this, but we have not received any answer.

Ms. Filippini. Could I add that there is a possible additional problem with the use of the memory typewriter, in that I have gotten different reports from different people, but the majority seem to indicate that the memory typewriter is not able to handle the Flexaline strips—they are very heavy cardboard—and that it does require a bit of adjusting and is therefore not as timesaving as it would appear to be. That is one of the reasons that the greater step to something more automated would, of course, be far more useful. However, as it stands now we are looking into various means of putting these out in a repetitive fashion using some sort of word processing if it can be done. But as I said, it is a question right now that I have been getting a rather negative feedback on the word processors.

Mr. Walker. What Federal agencies generate the most inquiries to you? Do the inquiries often indicate dissatisfaction? And what agencies are most difficult for you to contact and get a response from?

Ms. Beadle. On a consistent basis it is the Immigration. It is the hardest one to reach, because they do not have enough staff to man their phones, and we have constant complaints on a year-round basis. The other one is the Passport Office, which has a peakload right now, and this has been their worst year ever. They have never had so many passport requests, because I was in conference with the Director of the Passport Office here and he explained it to me as probably caused by the lowered air fares, especially to the Orient. And again, this being a cosmopolitan city, people have to come here to the Passport Office in northern California. So I see their difficulties, but it is also frustrating to the people, because they have only two telephone numbers. One gives a recording, and at the end of the recording, which gives people the idea of what they have to bring in order to apply for a passport, there is a real person at the end, when they pick up the phone, which is rare. And they really cannot do it, because as the director told me, if they pick up the phone, then they cannot process the passports. It is a vicious circle, and I really see their difficulty.

Sometimes people think that because we are in the lobby we are an extension of the Passport Service, and they expect us to run around the corner and take all these messages. But they are limited to a matter of life and death, and certainly when it is an emergency we will not turn anyone down in that particular case, and take a message and have the party call back. But we have to limit it because sometimes we have only two people downstairs, and who is going to mind the store?

Mr. WALKER. Now, you are saying that that is the frustrating one to deal with from your standpoint, for these reasons.

Ms. BEADLE. For the people.

Mr. WALKER. Yes; but is that also your largest volume of calls?

Ms. BEADLE. At the traveling time, certainly, yes; that is the peak. Now, this will level off. It will level off in a month or so, or even less than a month. It will come down, and pick up again around Christmastime when people start their traveling. And in the meantime, of course, we have Internal Revenue, which was a horrendous year this year because they relocated the telephones. Instead of having the bank in San Francisco where the office is, they relocated the telephones to Oakland. And people are irate, because they have to pay toll messages. The say, "What do you mean, the telephone is in Oakland when the office is here?" And it is really hard to explain. They do have a toll-free number, but we were not permitted to use it, because that is from the outlying areas only. So we had really a horrendous predicament, and we feel with the people who are angry, but we have not a very good explanation.

So indeed, we have been in such a state that when they say, "I am going to tell my Congressman," we say, "Please do." You know, what can we do? Our hands are tied.

Mr. WALKER. That is assuming we have an answer.

Ms. BEADLE. No comment.

Ms. PUGH. In San Diego it is Immigration, too. We are right next to the border. We have two people that are on the Immigration counter. They handle the long line that starts at 7 o'clock in the morning outside. They open their doors at 8. They start processing. Those same two people answer all the public phones coming in, which are two lines. So you can imagine how often the people get into Immigration. They call us wondering what is wrong with Immigration. It is ringing. And it will ring 100 times, but they do not answer. It is frustrating to us and it is frustrating to the Immigration people, too, I am

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sure. And it is undoubtedly the lack of personnel, over here where we are.

The Navy is another one. We account for a lot of calls for them. But that is understandable, because the Navy have their own talk, and people will call in wanting to know their individual numbers that are not listed in the phone book. We are working with them presently now, in trying to have more complete listings.

Ms. Tirre. Along with New York, Los Angeles has the busiest immigration office in the country, and our lobby is swirling with children and people from 7 a.m. on. That is our busiest agency, I think. The Internal Revenue Service also generates a lot, but they are much better organized and you can get them on the phone. In Los Angeles, you cannot get—I do not know of anybody that ever gets them on the phone, because we constantly sit there every day and listen to, "I have been calling the Immigration Service for two weeks and I have never been able to get them not busy. What is wrong? I have called the telephone company. They tell us the equipment is out of order." And they start this long harangue. So we have gotten to the point where we just jump right in in the middle of all that harangue and say, "But what did you want from the Immigration Service?" and try to do a little bit to help them with the type of information we know. I mean, it is certainly not legalistic and not technical, but we do take quite a lot off their back that way, and they are very, very grateful. The Immigration Service does need more telephone service in Los Angeles, without a question. And I do not know what it will take to get it, but it is something that better be done pretty soon. I expect to get someone shot if they do not.

The Federal Communications Commission is located in Long Beach, which is quite a long way from the center of town. That again is a toll call, and we get complaints about that, why do they have to go to Long Beach. They serve three States out of that office, and I think they have two telephones. And that is a constant source of complaint.

The Veterans' Administration has a lot of telephone system, but frequently it either is out of order or something, because we get lots of complaints that they cannot reach it. We do have a good liaison, however, with them as well as with the Social Security people, and IRS, too. With those complicated telephone systems that they have in that area, when we find that we are getting five or six or seven calls from an area that are saying, "I have been trying that number and I have not been able to reach it," we figure they should know about it, and maybe they have some telephone difficulty. So we do have good liaison, to report that back to them.

In general, those are the agencies that generate the largest number of inquiries in our center.

Mr. Snaider. The largest number of inquiries that we get are about the Civil Service Commission, somewhere between 10 and 15 percent year round. Part of that is that we are in the same building as the Job Information Center, so the overwhelming majority of our walk-ins relate to jobs. That might be changing, since they are going to be moving out, and we do not know what effect that will have.

The problems we have on a year-round basis are the Immigration Service, there is no question, the staffing problems and also the management problems, the arbitrary hours and other things. We just cannot keep up with it. But we also have periodic problems with Internal Revenue Service. Even though they have a Sacramento field office, there is no phone number in Sacramento. It, too, rings in Oakland. It is an 800 number. We get numbers of complaints from people who want to call Sacramento, and there is simply no way.

As with Evelyn's case, when we get complaints from people that they are not being able to get through to IRS, if we try it and we do not get through either or have the same type of problem, then what we will do is call down to our contacts, and again report that. We do try it first. Often people have only tried one or two times. And very often, even though they are on the phone complaining that they cannot get through, we find that we get through on the first time and there is a person answering us immediately.

Social security we have a problem with, with them serving a large area and not having a toll-free line. And the phone might ring over 100 times. That is also true with immigration. So we get a lot of complaints. That is generally only a problem at the beginning of the month, and when we explain what is going on people usually are cooperative and just say that they will——

Mr. WALKER. It is people who have not gotten their check and this kind of thing?

Mr. SNAIDER. Right, everybody is phoning up to say, "Where is my money?" and it just swamps the system.

Mr. WALKER. I understand that Sacramento has a Bureau of Land Management office.

Mr. SNAIDER. Yes, we do.

Mr. WALKER. What has been the result of that for you?

Mr. SNAIDER. In what way?

Mr. WALKER. Does the fact that it is there present any particular problems or make any special demands on you?

Mr. SNAIDER. No, actually, it takes some of the load off our work, quite honestly. If someone calls up and just has a simple question, for example, "Can I homestead?" or "How do I get land?" we already have the information from General Services Administration and Bureau of Land Management, and we just send it to them. But unlike the other cities which were having to provide the information about the renting of horses and burros themselves, or the adopting of horses and burros, we had an office that we could just get people to. We do, of course, probably get more inquiries about which office to talk to within BLM concerning the land records and mining claims, but very few problems with them. They are a good agency.

The agency that we have the worst problems with, though, not on an over time basis, but the problems that we have been unable to resolve, is the Labor Department, the part of it that deals in workers' compensation for Federal employees. We never seem to be able to get through to them or to find out what is going on. And we notice that even the congressional offices have problems.

Mr. WALKER. When somebody calls in to one of your offices, how do you go about getting at what the real problem is, what the real question is that they are asking and so on? Do you have some method? Do you train your people in some methodology to get down to what the real thing is that they want to talk to you about?

Mr. SNAIDER. Sometimes there is no way to find out. If the person wants to tell you about a problem but only wants to use a title that he thinks might be nice, then you have to respond to what you are being told. What I have tried to tell my people is that if it is not making sense, then just keep going back to the person and say—just make it appear that we do not understand. Even if we have a good idea of where we are going, just say to the person, "I don't understand what you mean by that. Would you explain what we are really looking for here." And usually people will see that you are interested. They are not at all put off by the fact that you are playing dumb. They are appreciative of the fact that you are taking an interest in the question, and will help you to find out what they are looking for.

Sometimes there are questions that we simply do not understand that we take anyway, if they are a technical or scientific matter. We will take down the information that we are given and then go on to someone else in the area that handles that, the National Bureau of Standards, for example. There was a man who called me about a certain temperature conversion that I had never heard of. Well, he knew what he was talking about, and I had to rely on him for that, because the fact that I did not understand that question was immaterial.

So as I say, what I have tried to instill in the people who work in the office is simply to get them to explain as much as possible until you get to the point where you are positive what they are talking about.

Ms. TIRRE. I tell my people that we are kind of like newspaper reporters. We need the who, what, where, when and how of something. And that person who is taking the information from the caller must have a visual picture himself of what it is that that person wants. And I say you have to fill in that picture before you can go any further, before you can articulate that to someone else and even help that person. So it is kind of a learning process, particularly with new people. They will take the beginning information from the caller, and then they will say, "Would you excuse me for a moment," and they will go to the supervisor and say, "This person wants so and so," and you find out that they do not have all the information that is needed. So you say, "Would you ask them this question or that question." It is a matter of improving interviewing skills, and that is the thing that is really the nitty-gritty of a successful operation.

Ms. PUGH. Basically, we do the same thing. I normally will repeat the question. "Is this the question you are asking?" And when they say, "Yes, I am asking this." "Well, are you sure that this is a department, because I firmly believe that the answer to your question lies perhaps in a State office. Truly it is a Federal program but it lies in the State office. And I believe that if you will call this certain number, that they will help you. And if you get this information from this office, is this what you want?" I think that is it, just as Evelyn said, getting it right down there and telling the people that call you, helping them in understanding their question. They are not phrasing it correctly, most of the time. I think, too, that this would affect your previous question, Mr. Walker, about a buffer, being afraid of a buffer. Too many of the people that call us do not know the agency that will resolve their question. That is the point.

Ms. **Beadle.** Sometimes people call and they say, "I don't know why I am calling you and I really do not know what I want, and I am sure you don't know it anyway, but here I am." And it is true. It happens quite frequently. It is amazing how ignorant the public is. I am not saying that in a derogatory manner, because I came here, and I did not even know there were three layers of government. I came here and wanted to go to the Labor Department and ask them for a job, because in England it was called the Labor Department. I really feel for the people. I understand where they are coming from. So we have to have a lot of patience.

When people call and say, "I want to go to Africa," then I say, "Are you an American citizen? Do you have a passport? You have to get a visa. You have to get shots. If you have valuables, you go also the Bureau of Customs and declare your camera, et cetera." So there are many, many referrals we give, and we have to be very, very patient. And indeed, the people are so confused at times that you have to take a lot of time explaining the bureaucracy, and taking down the material. And sometimes we do not have it right off the top of our heads, even though some of us have been in the job for 10 years.

You know, it never ends, the learning process. It continues at all times. And people look at me and say "You have been here such a long time, you must know everything." No, every day there is something very new, and we help each other. That is the only way. Mr. Ireland used to say, "From these three people here, one of them always comes up with the answer, so we have to work like a team and pool our resources." And we call around. We take the name and telephone number and the question, and then we call around, all around the United States, and get the answer for them and come back to them.

About feeding the information to the new personnel, I always tell them, "Come back to me after I took your call over and say, 'Hey, what did you do with so and so?' Please don't let me forget it." Because I have so much on my mind, and I have a very good memory for technicalities, and I feed them the information, and I give them exactly the steps I have taken in order to attain the results. And they are very happy to do it that way. It has to be done on a one-to-one basis.

I have written memos with outlines, how to draw a person out, and there are certain techniques. But when it comes down to the nitty-gritty, each case is unique.

Mr. **Walker.** What happens, just to follow up on your point, when the person calling in really has a question that has absolutely nothing to do with government, State, local or Federal?

Ms. **Beadle.** That is all right. Then we explain it. If somebody says, "I want to go youth hosteling in Switzerland", we do not say, "Listen, that has nothing to do with us." We give them the number.

Mr. **Walker.** So you keep numbers of private agencies as well.

Ms. **Beadle.** Absolutely.

Mr. **Walker.** So that you can refer the public to things other than simply Federal agencies.

Ms. **Beadle.** Absolutely. We do not stop just dead and say, "That has nothing to do with us." On the contrary, we try to give them as much information as possible.

Mr. **Walker.** Thank you very much. Staff, do you have any questions?

Mr. ROMNEY. I would like to make a suggestion, Mr. Chairman. The panelists have assembled a number of questions, typical and atypical, of their work, and with those questions the responses they have been able to give. And it may be, Mr. Chairman, that it would be useful to have these submitted for the record and included in the printed transcript.

Mr. WALKER. Without objection ordered. If you would submit those to us it would be, I think, very valuable to have that as part of our record of the kind of discourse that goes on.

OK, thank you very much. Your testimony has been most useful, and we thank you for appearing here today.

[The information is in the subcommittee files.]

Mr. WALKER. All right, for our next witness we will call Audrey Powers.

Thank you very much for appearing, and we look forward to your testimony.

STATEMENT OF AUDREY POWERS, REFERENCE LIBRARIAN, BAY AREA REFERENCE CENTER, SAN FRANCISCO PUBLIC LIBRARY

Ms. POWERS. I left with Mr. Romney a brief description from an article that I have written on the Bay Area Reference Center. I am a reference librarian at the Bay Area Reference Center.

Just in summation, we are a federally funded project located at San Francisco Public Library. We are funded under the Library Services and Construction Act. We are administered by the California State Library. We have been in existence for over 10 years, and our primary purpose is to provide backup reference support for primarily public libraries in northern California, but in the last several years, we have also been providing our services for academic and special libraries, particularly in the greater bay area.

We have a corresponding organization in southern California, the Southern California Answering Network. Between the two organizations, Spark and Sean, we provide backup reference for all of the libraries in the State of California.

It is a very innovative, exciting reference library support project. We get a tremendous number of inquiries. Our clientele are libraries. They are not individual patrons directly. What we do when we get these questions is analyze the resources at San Francisco Public, trying to find answers for these patrons. If these resources fail us we contact special and academic libraries, organizations like the Federal Information Center, any other place we can lay our hands on that might have relevant information for our patrons.

The subject requests range over the entire area of information. We do have a number of requests on regular basis which relate to the Government structure, and these are the frequent ones where we contact the Federal Information Center. We have a number of other programs which are outlined publications, workshops that we provide for librarians.

In terms of the actual relationship with the Federal Information Center, we have been calling them since the early 1970's. In December 1977, I visited the local San Francisco Office of the Federal Information Center in an attempt to learn more about its operation and also to offer the services that the Bay Area Reference Center provides to the staff of the Federal Information Center.

In the last several decades the Federal Government has grown tremendously in size and complexity and sphere of concern. For the public this bureaucracy has increasingly been removed, intimidating and difficult to cope with. The Federal Information Center is the logical first place for people who need information to enter the system, particularly if those individuals are not at all sure, as they frequently are not, of the appropriate agency that might provide information for them.

Besides the optional service to the public of getting them the needed information, there is the great public relations benefit as a fallout to all of this. The public can really see its Government working for them, and, of course, we librarians become part of that public when we seek information from the Federal Information Center.

We have always found the staff of the FIC to be cooperative, friendly, and knowledgeable about the structure of the Government. We feel that their function is very parallel to that of public libraries. Ultimately our role, as theirs, is to get our public in touch with whatever information they need as quickly and efficiently as possible.

The Federal Information Center always follows up. One is not likely to be transferred endlessly from agency to agency. We find frequently that the staff will say, "If you don't get the information when you contact this particular agency, be sure and call us back," and try to find another appropriate source. There is one place, in other words, where the public can always return if they don't get satisfaction for whatever is happening, and I think that prior to the existence of this organization the kind of frustration that people would feel with that endless sort of transfer was very large.

We find again that there is a parallel situation in public libraries, in that we have to always be aware that we have a responsibility to follow through for our patrons, too.

I think that is about it on my prepared testimony. I do have some typical questions which we have asked the Federal Information Center and the kinds of times when we contact them. If you would like to hear more about that or if you want to ask me questions, go ahead.

Mr. WALKER. Well, if you do have some examples of the kinds of questions that you have asked and the kinds of responses that you have gotten, I think we would appreciate it if you would submit those for the record. If I gather from what you have told us here, your use of the FIC's is primarily to get user information for the library, and you would be asking sometimes very technical questions with regard to the Federal Government and then use the FIC to get referred to where you should get that information. Is that correct?

Ms. POWERS. Exactly; as an example, when we had a question on illegal aliens, it was a very complex question. The agency that had asked us this question needed to know the number of illegal aliens in California and the breakdown by which country the aliens had come from and so forth, and the Federal Information Center provided us with a good contact to get that information.

Mr. WALKER. We may want that contact in Congress. There are a couple of committees that are looking for that figure too, I think.

Ms. Powers. Of course, part of the answer to that is no one is going to volunteer to step forward and be counted as an illegal alien, but there are some pretty good estimates that people have done in various agencies trying to find figures like that.

In the summation that I have I did note that we call the Federal Information Center when first of all we are not sure which Government agency is the appropriate one or when we have inquiries that might relate to several governmental agencies, and we want to make sure that we have covered all bases. We need to be sure that the information that we have is the most current, is correct, that we have the best policy summation statement, that we have the most accurate regulation or whatever, where we are not satisfied to just rely on the printed documents that we have.

San Francisco Public Library is a Federal Government Depository Library; so we get a tremendous number of Government documents, but frequently they fail us because of the slowness of publication, and people need information that is much more accurate and more up to date frequently than is found in the printed literature. We, also, contact them when a question—it may not necessarily be related to a specific Government agency, but we think that the Government might be a good source of information on this sort of topic, in other words, again attempting to cover all bases.

Mr. Walker. Did I understand you correctly that you offered your services to the FIC should they need it? Have they availed themselves of the services that you provide through the reference collection?

Ms. Powers. On a few occasions they have contacted us, but I think primarily that they contact the documents department when they need to know if in San Francisco there is a copy available of the local documents that an individual might not need that, say, isn't available through the Government bookstore or some other source. We are a strange hybrid organization, in that we are housed at San Francisco Public Library, but we are a Federal project. We don't have a library collection of our own, but our function is to get at information. So, for instance, one occasion when they contacted us was a question about worm farming, and they had a large amount of information already for the person who needed this information, but we had additional information in our files on some privately published materials that related to worm farming and so forth.

Mr. Walker. That is all the questions I have. Oh, one additional question; how often does FIC refer an inquiry to your service?

Ms. Powers. I really don't have any exact figures on that. I think they probably call us at most every month, every other month on that nature. More frequently, as I said, they will refer the inquiries to the public library, since we don't accept inquiries direct from the public.

It would have to be that they would be calling to try to get information from us for their patron. So, if it is outside the purview of the Government structure they are more likely, as I said, to refer the question direct to the public library from which the question would come to BARC if it were not answered at that local library level, and I was just talking with Warren about a question that was similar to that that was generated through Sacramento that we eventually got at

BARC and answered, but it started with the Federal Information Center.

Mr. **Walker**. OK, fine. Thank you very much. We appreciate your testimony.

Is Mr. Camacho available? Mr. Camacho, would you come forward, please? Mr. Camacho, we appreciate your appearing before the committee today and look forward to your testimony. Would you identify your associate for the record, as well, please?

STATEMENT OF JULIAN CAMACHO, DEPUTY DIRECTOR, DEPARTMENT OF GENERAL SERVICES, STATE OF CALIFORNIA

Mr. **Camacho**. All right. My name is Julian Camacho, and I am chief deputy director of the Department of General Services, State of California, and to my right is Mr. Walt Russ who is a telecommunications engineer in our communications division, department of general services. The department of general services, division of communications has responsibility for all VHF, UHF, microwave telecommunications systems for the State of California.

Mr. **Walker**. All right, thank you. If you will proceed with your testimony then, we will appreciate it.

Mr. **Camacho**. The testimony that we have to offer is actually very brief. We are very supportive of the program. As far as we are concerned, it is still in the infancy stage. We are participating in one project in the State of California, the San Diego Information Center. The project is currently funded out of our ATSS Revenue Center. We take the money to participate in this out of our expense account. Given the Prop 13 impacts at the State level and the current very dynamic flux of the budgetary actions, I cannot at this time advise you, or give you any factual reading on whether we are going to be able to continue participating in that program. The department of general services, the agency secretary, Mr. Leonard Grimes, the Governor of the State of California, I think we all believe that the Information Center is extremely beneficial, something that really should be aggressively pursued, a program that maybe should be actively publicized to the people of the State of California. I think maybe one of the reasons for Prop 13 and the support for it is many people don't know what happens at the county level, much less at the State level. So, we are very supportive of it, however, right now, I think in the—I don't really know where the program stacks up with respect to the various priorities the State is establishing.

Mr. **Walker**. The specific legislation that we are considering, have you had a chance to look at that and do you have any particular recommendations with regard to it?

Mr. **Russ**. Yes; we have looked at legislation, the legislation, and I don't see a basic problem with it. Some of the comments made earlier about the control and management of the program under the auspices of GSA. I don't necessarily agree with the comments. I feel that if it is made known that the program is in being to survey specific purpose, I think you will gain the cooperation of the other Federal agencies. As far as the State is concerned, there are certain deficiencies, I think, in the system that does not allow the system to function at the optimum, and one I speak of, of course, is a liaison situation with State agencies.

Of course, your legislation would not necessarily cover that, but I do feel that there should be some mention in the legislation about the State participation and the county participation, even though we do pay a portion of the overall cost. I think to relate specifically to a Federal Information Center in the legislation, the legislature does not necessarily give GSA the powers of authority to use your intergovernmental prerogatives in management of the programs. So, I think there should be some mention to that effect.

Mr. WALKER. Are you suggesting that perhaps instead of Federal Information Centers we really ought to create Government Information Centers and perhaps establish through law some shared cost procedure where the Federal Government would finance the bulk of it, but there would also be a shared financing of it by State and local governments as well? Do I gather that that might be a——

Mr. RUSS. That is the thrust, I think, or should be the thrust. You see, most of the programs that are of concern to the general public, and we are only reaching about 55 percent of them anyway, are programs that are federally funded, and normally administered by the State, county, and city and many, many times in sort of an overlapping manner. So, I think the Federal Government should assume some responsibility in getting that program matter or that project matter communicated to the public. So, I do see the emergence of a governmental information center, and there is no way around the government aspect of it because there is no way that one of the information specialists can differentiate between who has the program responsibility. OK, you get a question from a citizen who has a concern about a program, and as indicated earlier, he or she may not know who has the administrative responsibility for that particular program. So, you might end up answering a county question or referring to a county office and you might end up referring to a State or a Federal office for that particular program matter. So, you do have a tremendous overlap in program administration at the various governmental levels. So, I do see moneys and some authority set up to permit the General Services Administration to deal with these kind of things, and I do see some moneys in some kind of a fund sharing arrangement, not necessarily on a dollar-to-dollar basis or a ratio basis but, perhaps some contribution, and in the State of California we do have a tremendous communications system and this type of contribution, I think would be vital.

Mr. WALKER. What about a program that would set up—and I am just throwing figures around here; I don't even know what the figures might be—but what about a program that would be 80-percent Federal and 10-percent State and 10-percent local or 70, 15, and 15 or some such program like that. Is that what you are saying?

Mr. CAMACHO. Obviously, we need a program. We need a program, and to what extent the State of California can participate is still, you know, difficult to determine.

As you know, the Governor and the legislature are proposing some cutbacks in the State budget, and the first place they are going to go is general office expense, and that is typically where the toll-free lines, the information lines, that is where they are being funded out of. Very recently the department of agriculture in the State of California set up or attempted to set up a toll-free line in order to determine what the demand was for various fruits that were available from farmers in trying to determine if in fact that fruit could be distributed directly to antipoverty programs or if in fact that food or fruit could be, produce, could be distributed directly to the elderly programs.

It turned out that the toll-free lines as established were extremely expensive, so expensive we could not afford them. The department of consumer affairs has attempted the same thing; the leasing of toll-free lines, again, is extremely expensive, not only in terms of the trunk lines that have to be leased from P.T. & T. and the other providers but also the manpower necessary to man them. There is a need. There is a tremendous need, and there is a need for a program and a system and not the brush fires that we have attempted to cope with.

Now, whether it should be 80 percent, 20 percent, 90 percent, 10 percent, I think would be determined by perhaps some follow-on meetings. I don't think we could answer that question here.

Mr. WALKER. But I gather though that you think that the value of the program whether we——

Mr. CAMACHO. There is a tremendous need and demand for this type of a program.

Mr. WALKER. But for a joint program and not just as a Federal Information Center program but a joint program that covers all governmental entities, I mean I gather that from you and——

Mr. CAMACHO. That is a true statement, the Government Information Center, county, municipal, perhaps State and Federal, State particularly.

One of the things that is extremely important is the distribution of produce. It is amazing how much produce goes to waste in this State, and produce that could be used by the poor, produce that could be used by the elderly and you see in the paper every day during the summer the Gray Bears, for instance, out of Santa Cruz, a group or a coalition of the elderly, they go out and they harvest what is left over after harvesting machines go through, say, a tomato field or a lettuce field, and they have tremendous amount of demand for that.

Mr. WALKER. How would the Federal Information Center relate to that?

Mr. CAMACHO. The Federal Information Center could easily tie into the department of agriculture and directly into each agricultural district and instead of the elderly going on a hit-or-miss basis, a program could be developed to allow them to say, go directly to wherever this produce exists. Last summer I don't know how many tons of pears went to waste, how many tons of peaches went to waste.

Mr. WALKER. It seems to me that you are proposing something that is a little bit different from the concept here.

Mr. CAMACHO. No; I think we are talking about information.

Mr. WALKER. But you are talking about the Information Center becoming a disseminator of information rather than a contact point for people who are asking for information. I mean that would change the concept, I think, rather significantly. Are you proposing that kind of a change?

Mr. CAMACHO. We are talking about information, and you are talking about tiers of information. I am saying that the Information Center could certainly provide for people contacting the right agencies, the right departments, and so whether it be directly to the governmental information center or the governmental information center being able to channel the caller, say, over to the department of agriculture or the consumer affairs department, department of general services, whatever, that is possible.

Now, when you start talking on whether, in fact, the information is actually provided right there, you are talking about a management problem.

Mr. WALKER. But, I gather that what you are saying is that the Information Center should be a disseminator of information, that it should round up information like the amount of produce that is available and so on and get it to the people who could use it. It think that would be a drastic change in concept of what we are attempting to do here. That would give it somewhat of a public relations orientation, and I would question whether or not we should move the FIC's in that kind of direction.

Mr. CAMACHO. That would depend on how much money you have. What I am saying is, when somebody calls in, they can either be channeled off to, say, the appropriate department as perhaps what you envision might provide, or if the resources are available and there is, let us say, a sufficient amount of demand for a particular service, there might be a direct tie-in. There might be a task force assigned to a governmental information center; why not? Why not during the peak harvest months have a capability to tie in directly to a task force that can provide information on produce available? I think that that is one area that should be very seriously pursued.

Mr. WALKER. Well, I guess my question on that is whether or not it should be tied to the Federal Information Center concept. You see GSA as being the instrumentality that moves in to set up these task forces and so on. It seems to me that that takes us a giant step beyond the idea of people calling someplace to get numbers and to get information about what the Federal Government does.

Mr. CAMACHO. I would agree with you that it is a giant step beyond maybe what you had envisioned. All I am saying is that this is one area that is of particular interest at the State level and that is a distribution of produce that currently is going to waste in the fields, and how that is handled could be greatly assisted by this governmental information center.

Mr. WALKER. Mr. Chairman, I have no further questions.

Mr. BURTON. Mr. Romney?

Mr. ROMNEY. If the FIC should, and they are already so inclined, want to extend their capability to provide information to State and local governments, what could the State government do by way of making special or technical services available to the FIC's that would not involve any outlay of funds, particular outlay of funds, by the State in this case?

Mr. CAMACHO. I guess perhaps a grant would be in order. Currently we, in the department of general services, we are the recipients of a grant from OMBI, for instance, to see to it that minority business persons, for instance, begin to participate more fully with the State's procurement programs, and we do that through a grant funded by the department of commerce.

We certainly could put together a task force of people that could participate at a governmental information center if such a grant were available to cover their salaries.

We, at the State level, would like to participate in a program, but right now we are a bit strapped.

Mr. ROMNEY. Mr. Camacho, would you provide for the record the statute provisions within the State of California and any regulations that have been issued in the past that relate to information and referral of services by the State or local government that may have local application?

Mr. CAMACHO. Mr. Romney, we currently do not have a program to participate, legislatively mandated to participate in an FIC or GIC program. We are doing this thing based purely on administrative prerogative, and because we don't have a direction from the legislature those sorts of regulations do not exist in the administrative register.

Mr. ROMNEY. Does the State have a program that is within the State government that is not extended into the cooperative dimension with the Federal Government?

Mr. CAMACHO. No, sir, we do not have an information system currently.

Mr. BURTON. It is safe to say that whatever you are doing in this area is probably going to get cut back?

Mr. CAMACHO. I really cannot say, Congressman. It is difficult to say just where the adjustments are going to be made, and currently our participation, a very minimal participation, is being funded out of our ATSS Revenue Center, and that money is acquired by levying a surcharge on all users of the ATSS which is the State telephone system.

We accumulate those moneys, and we use those moneys to cover our operator costs, to cover equipment expenses, to cover the billing process, and we have an expense account in there that allows us to participate in the GIC at San Diego.

We would like to broaden our participation. We would like to make it far more meaningful in terms of such things as the distribution of produce that for lack of information rots in the fields of California, and it is quite substantial. Last year it was an alarming amount of peaches and pears and such. It is amazing.

Mr. BURTON. How does the department of finance look on this program? Do they think it is a good idea?

Mr. CAMACHO. We, of course, review our budgets with the department of finance and they approved it for the last fiscal period. I cannot tell you what the adjustments are going to be made in the next fiscal period. We are going to support the program.

Mr. ROMNEY. Mr. Russ, could you give us an idea how frequently and how extensively your contacts with the FIC's in California have been; and second, could you give us your impressions and suggestions as a result of your work with them are referred and carried out? Do they end up as improvements or changes in the FIC's to any extent?

Mr. RUSS. My contact with FIC's, the management structure of the entire program started about 2 years ago, and it started at a time when we really did not know what was happening in San Diego. We knew we were contributing on a year-to-year basis to a program that had some impact on State government, but we did not know what it was, and at that time, of course, I contacted the GSA office, the region office, and we started talking about looking into some means of evaluating the program to the extent that it impacts State government. We did a cursory analysis and the analysis revealed that we did have considerable support in that area in San Diego, not only San Diego, as a matter of fact in all of the centers because I find that they did not refuse to answer questions or refer questions relating to State government.

I have had the privilege of working with the last two people, the one that is in office now, Mrs. Filippini and another, Drew Steckety who used to manage the program, and I have had very good cooperation from Drew Steckety and Mary Filippini, toured the sites with me. We did see possibilities where improvements should be made, and fortunately along the same line, the same time frame OMB was doing their report to the President, and consequently we shared in their concerns, and they shared in ours. Many of these improvements we are about to see, such as the relocation of the information center here in San Francisco. We have a few science problems here and there. There were some management weaknesses that the manual that is being published by GSA should resolve, some standardization in procedure and so on that had to come about.

Also, we find that one of the other deficiencies that we note, you see, there is a reason that a public would inquire at an information center about a particular program or project. A lot of them don't read the telephone directory. A lot of them don't have telephone directories A lot of times the telephone directories are not properly prepared and so on. So, we need a method of periodically evaluating the reason calls are made to information centers. If it means an improvement in a department, in the information process in a particular department or if it means more publicity or if it means better telephone listings than the telephone directory, then we should go about resolving those deficiencies to make the program a better program.

Now, this in most cases will reduce telephone calls. We have a telephone operator function in Sacramento, but telephone operators are normally oriented to a particular office. They don't know much about programs. They don't know much about projects and grants and this type of thing. So, they refer calls in many cases to the information centers. You find that about the public telephone utility operators. They refer telephone calls. You will find departments in the State, in the county, in the city, and the Federal Government referring calls to the information center.

So, we see this as a very, very viable object, and I think a needed one in State government, and because as I said earlier the overlapping of programs and projects, I feel that it should be just a real thrust in getting Congress to see that we have got programs that we are funding with taxpayers' money, and we don't have the benefits. We are not getting the benefits from those programs because we are not communicating them down to but 55 percent of the people anyway, and the program should be expanded, and it is almost impossible to predict the monetary situation as Mr. Camacho says on a year-by-year basis or a day-by-day basis, and I feel very definitely that this legislation should include an all encompassing funding of whatever information is necessary for the public to gain whatever they are seeking information on, and I think it is our responsibility to see that it is done, one way or the other.

The program itself now, the weaknesses, I think they are coming on real fine. I think we have a darn good manager in the lady who was just appointed, and I feel that cooperation is continuing.

Mr. Romney. Will you be continuing your contacts with the FIC's in the foreseeable future?

Mr. Russ. Yes, sir, I think we will. We have a little work to do, also in State government, and that is to try to help through some liaison in providing additional information on government operations. We are going to set up a pool of people in various agencies that will provide us bulletins, personnel changes, new programs coming into being and even with our assembly, the representatives, these type people. We know they are involved, but to what extent they are involved we don't know, and when new projects or legislation is forthcoming, say from our legal types, then this should be made available to the public information centers as well.

So, we will be continually involved, and I think probably more so in the coming months and years.

Mr. Romney. Do you have any surveys or reports that relate to the problems of information or the problems of generation of information-type questions that you might wish to supply for the record, Mr. Russ or Mr. Camacho?

Mr. Camacho. Currently we are expecting an annual report from the GIC in San Diego. It will give us a reading on what the nature of the calls in were and then we hope to be able to determine what percentage were questions that were being asked of the State governmental structure, the administrative structure and until we have that information we cannot answer your question.

Mr. Russ. We will have a document. I did not give this to Mr. Camacho, but it does portray to some extent some of the problems that have been encountered and the actions that have been taken on those problems, and most of these actions are to the satisfaction of the State.

Mr. Camacho. There is no problem with the information that Mr. Russ has provided for me. He will make that available to you, Mr. Romney.

Mr. Burton. OK, thank you very much. Good to see you. Julian.

Our final witness, Wolfgang Rosenberg, Regional Public Information Officer for the Department of Energy, region 9. We have your statement that we will make part of the record. Feel free to go through it, highlight it, or anyway you would like to.

STATEMENT OF WOLFGANG H. ROSENBERG, PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER, REGION 9, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

Mr. Rosenberg. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to offer to Mr. Romney a corrected copy and say a word about that. I am very pleased, honored, privileged, and delighted to be here, and I would like to add my own welcome to the staff and to Mr. Walker of San Francisco. I am sorry that Mr. Walker cannot be here right now because I was intrigued by his line of questioning, and I thought that he raised many of the pertinent issues.

While he was talking I was reflecting in the back of the room and looking up at the Great Seal of the United States, and it seems to me that the motto up there is perhaps the most appropriate motto for the Federal information centers, and it seems to me that my own concern with the disarray and poor service and poor perception of public information service in the Federal Establishment today is a perversion of that motto, and as I looked at the motto it seemed to me that it is kind of ex unum too many pluribuses, and that is the problem. I think that we have too many agencies, too many spokesmen, and a bewildering array for the public which the Federal information centers can help to clean up.

I was thinking of that very motto and the opportunity here, Mr. Chairman, to see how the Government should operate. We are in a room of the judicial branch of our U.S. Government as the guests from the executive branch of the legislative branch. That is the way to go at the American public. I like that, and I must say that in my own experience which I am glad to talk about if you want me to, few things have touched me as much as my own contact as an agency public information officer with these Federal information center directors here and specifically in relation to the comment I just made, I was moved when I went to San Diego and found that Marie Pugh, one of the center directors was concerned with these very same things, how the Government operates and was training her staff in the interrelationship of the Government the way we learn it in civics class, and I must say that in my 3 years in California that is the only time in many thousands of exposures to governmental situations that I have seen a Federal employee concerned with how our Government works.

I would like to say to you that my principal concern in connection with my testimony is to be helpful in any way that we can to the committee and to the GSA in promoting the Government information center concept, and I would like to give you my own view, in addition to my testimony.

I am sure that neither you nor the staff at this point want to hear eight pages which speak for themselves which I would be delighted to read but which I am sure you don't want me to.

The government information center concept is such a logical, sensible concept it should not be argued in terms of divisional or governmental entities.

I can best illustrate that by my own situation as a public information officer that does precisely the same thing that these information center directors do. One of the questions here in California that I get frequently is what I call the Contra Costa Buick question. Let me illustrate it to you. The Contra Costa Buick question is someone in Contra Costa County calling me as a Federal information officer in the Energy Department and saying, "I bought a new Buick, and I don't trust the gas station on the corner. He is advertising 94 octane whatever it is, and I think he is getting away with 90 octane. Who do I complain to?" It took me some research in 1975 to establish that he does not complain to the Environmental Protection Agency. He does not complain to the Federal Trade Commission. He does not complain to any governmental entity in the Federal Establishment, nor does he complain to the county, nor does he complain to any local government, but would you believe it, he goes to Sacramento to the department of agriculture, division of weights and measures, where there is a man who has a telephone number who will send an inspector to see whether that service station actually is giving him the right octane rating. I cannot think of a better example to illustrate the need for a government information center approach in order to give the public the service that it deserves.

I would be glad to entertain any questions that you and the staff have.

Mr. **Burton**. You mentioned providing the centers with information, publications in news releases about energy which would be very helpful. If each agency of Government did that, wouldn't they become innundated with releases?

Mr. **Rosenberg**. Well, indeed they would, Mr. Chairman, but my experience with the four center directors here in California is that they have uncommonly good judgment and sense. It seems to me in dealing with all four of them that they know the leaflets that the public needs and wants, and that they will self-select those same leaflets.

Mr. **Burton**. They would screen out?

Mr. **Rosenberg**. So, I think if any agency gets a little too pushy or promotional in trying to put forward things that the public really does not want, I think the good judgment of the center directors would prevail.

Mr. **Burton**. How do you make contact with the centers? Do you call them individually or do you go through the GSA region or what?

Mr. **Rosenberg**. I deal with them quite directly and continually, individually, and I think that is the way it should be, and I think GSA encourages that.

Mr. **Burton**. What do you think of the idea of the agencies sharing personnel with the centers on I guess TDY or lend-lease basis?

Mr. **Rosenberg**. I think it is a splendid idea. I don't know whether the resources are always available either on the center side or on the agency side, but I think it should be encouraged because one of my main concerns as I expressed in my formal statement is that the status of awareness of public information service in the agencies is generally deplorable, and I think that the Federal information centers and GSA could do a lot to alleviate that situation.

Mr. **Burton**. You mention a special type of center dealing with environment and energy. Would that not, you know, cause duplication? How would you work that one out?

I realize those are some of the hot problems, but if you get into that, then somebody is going to want a separate one on this and a separate one on something else.

Mr. **Rosenberg**. I think it is inevitable that that separateness goes on. I think that is the nature of the information pressures. In this particular instance I made special mention of that because it was partly at the instigation of the Federal information center here in San Francisco that we went that route. Here is a new problem for society. It is so bewildering that the Federal information center in their limited capacity really said in effect, "Help, you guys have some responsibility for this problem, and you ought to help face the public with a more organized and more generally kind of built-up information service system" which we then proceeded to do, and I think that will continue to happen in our society as problem A, B, C comes up and because the sources of information, the answer points are not yet identified. I think the agency should take responsibility for that and then work on a kind of cooperative basis with the Federal information centers when questions can be more routinely identified and classified.

Mr. Burton. I think your idea of having certain agency heads or bureaucrats do a stretch in the centers would be quite helpful. I just don't know how practical that would be. On the other hand it may not be practical, but it was probably a darn good idea. Would there be any other way to kind of accomplish the goal that you are trying to establish without having somebody TDY there?

Mr. Rosenberg. Sure, I would say in the most general way, Mr. Chairman, that the more the bureaucrats can be directly exposed to the public I think the healthier it is for a whole political system. I happen to come from an agency that is shrouded and swirling in controversy, as we all know, and last week was at a public hearing in Los Angeles where one of our Assistant Secretaries was not altogether happy with having citizens come up and suggest into a microphone that he resign. As the public information officer who is like a Federal information center person in our agency, I do hear from the public a lot that some of our officials perhaps ought to resign, and I thought it was a healthy thing that somebody high up heard that, and I think through public hearings and any other kind of public exposure anything that keeps the bureaucrats from insulating themselves is good and healthy. This way of having them actually experience——

Mr. Burton. It would probably be just as good as sending them to a management seminar, right?

Mr. Rosenberg. I would agree, yes, sir. You remind me, and I want to make the comment that we heard at the outset here that between the four of them, and I have forgotten the exact figures, but between, I think it was 550,000 increase in Los Angeles and 300,000 and some here and in San Diego, and 100,000 and some in Sacramento, that makes me think that there is more than 1 million inquiries, 1 million voices from the public in a year at these four centers, that most bureaucrats in our Federal Establishment are unaware of. I think it would be good if they were aware of them.

Mr. Burton. Can you describe the role of the Federal regional offices and how they relate to the FIC's? The regional councils?

Mr. Rosenberg. The Federal regional council. As you probably know, Mr. Chairman, the Federal regional council is established in each of 10 regions throughout the country and has a regional program outlook that comes from the desire to coordinate and cooperate major Federal funding programs that go to other levels of government. I think that at this point their contact with and direct relationship with the Federal information centers here is, while open and free and available, largely uncultivated, and I think that the FIC's have contact points for all e pluribus unum and representing the whole U.S. Government are in my mind natural outlet points for the interagency interests of the regional offices in the Federal Establishment getting together, and whatever programs the FRC's undertake, I think, can be helped and supported by the Federal information centers knowing about them and helping to answer inquiries about them.

Mr. BURTON. Just one last question. Have you seen the bill that we are considering in the legislation?

Mr. ROSENBERG. Yes, sir.

Mr. BURTON. Do you have any comments on that?

Mr. ROSENBERG. I really don't because I don't think I know enough about what is involved at the Washington end. It looked very good to me and I have no adverse thought or critical comment that I could offer.

Mr. BURTON. We have no further questions of you.

We do wish to thank the witnesses who have contributed much to the record and understanding of the program and do want to thank again the people out here who have helped the staff arrange this hearing and want to particularly mention the GSA building manager, Mr. Horn. And also, the rest of the staff, and I would like to commend the people who work in the center who do such terrific work for the people, bringing the government to them. We are, also, indebted to Chief Judge Peckham of the district court for this district of California and to his brother, Judge William A. Ingraham. That is his brother judge, not his brother, for letting us use this chamber, and with that the hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 1:41 p.m., the subcommittee adjourned, to reconvene subject to the call of the Chair.]

APPENDIX

Additional Material Submitted for the Record

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION
WASHINGTON, DC 20405

Honorable Thomas P. O'Neill, Jr.
Speaker of the House
of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Speaker:

Transmitted herewith for referral to the appropriate committee is a draft bill prepared by the General Services Administration "To Establish the Federal Information Centers."

On November 1, 1965, President Lyndon Johnson initiated an experimental network of Federal Information Centers through a Memorandum Announcing a New Drive to Improve the Government's Services to the Public:

> "The task of the Government is to serve the public. It has been my deep and continuing concern to assure that each American receives from his Government the fastest, most efficient and most courteous service. As our society grows more complex and our population expands we must explore every path in our quest to provide the best possible services for our individual citizens."

On November 30, 1965, President Johnson released a letter to the Chairman, Civil Service Commission, on the need for quality and excellence in Government, in which he expressed the belief that:

> "Eventually there should be a central information office in every major metropolitan area where citizens can get information, not only about Federal job opportunities, but about all functions of the Federal Government."

Based on these statements of the President and on the recommendations of a special GSA taskforce, the first pilot Federal Information Center opened in Atlanta, Georgia, in July 1966. The purpose of the experimental program was to test the feasibility of providing the public with easy access to Federal information and assistance through an efficient data and referral source, which would work in conjunction with other major Federal information services. On October 27, 1969, President Nixon directed that the pilot project be tested in major metropolitan areas, and that the cost of the project be shared by all benefitting agencies. Consequently, the number of centers was increased to the present 38, with operating costs being shared equally by 17 executive departments and agencies.

Simultaneously, in an effort to test another method of extending this service to more of the population, toll-free telephone tielines were made available to the citizens of 47 highly-populated areas in close proximity to Federal Information Center cities. Together, the centers and the tielines provide service to approximately 55 percent of the United States population on a local call basis.

In 1972, an experimental Federal-State-local-Government Information Center opened in San Diego, California. The San Diego Center has been testing procedures for centralizing research and referral services for all levels of Government in one jointly-funded facility.

The overwhelming success of the Federal Information Centers project in fiscal year 1977 is indicated by the approximately 8 million telephone, walk-in and mail inquiries from citizens in need of assistance or concerned with the functioning of the Government.

The Federal Information Center program is not intended to discourage the public from approaching a Federal Department or Agency directly with questions or problems. The program is to assist those who do not know where to turn to find an answer.

The proposed bill would authorize and direct the Administrator of General Services to establish within the General Services Administration a nationwide network of Federal Information Centers based on the currently-operating pilot centers, for the purpose of responding to requests from the public on the rules, programs and benefits of the Federal Government. Such authorization would permit the Administrator to establish the Federal Information Centers as a permanent program.

The bill would also authorize the Administrator to promulgate such regulations as may be necessary to the functioning of the Federal Information Centers and would authorize to be appropriated such sums as are required for the formal operation of the centers.

The proposed legislation would provide an appropriation of $7,000,000 for fiscal year 1980 and such sums that may be required thereafter to GSA for purposes of covering the full cost of the entire program, thereby eliminating the present procedure of allocating costs among benefitting agencies. The only increased cost to the taxpayer would result from the gradual growth of the program.

Because of the pressing need to improve the responsiveness of the Federal Government to the needs of America's citizens, prompt favorable consideration of the enclosed draft bill is recommended.

Sincerely,

Jay Solomon
Administrator

Enclosure

BURJCA002

Discussion Draft *

May 1, 1978

Legislative Counsel's Version

95th Congress
2d Session

Mr. John L. Burton

A BILL

To authorize the permanent establishment of a system of Federal Information Centers.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That this Act may be cited as the ``Federal Information Centers Act''.

Sec. 2. Title I of the Federal Property and Administrative Services Act of 1949 is amended by adding at the end thereof the following new section:

* Follows GSA draft closely but contains some technical changes

General
Services
Administration Washington, DC 20405

MAY 31 1978

Honorable Jack Brooks
Chairman, Committee on
Government Operations
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

By letter of May 11, 1978, your Committee requested the views of the General Services Administration (GSA) on H.R. 12583, 95th Congress, a bill "To authorize the permanent establishment of a system of Federal Information Centers."

GSA strongly supports the enactment of the proposed legislation, and we very much hope that this bill will receive favorable consideration by your Committee.

On May 18, 1978, GSA testified in favor of H.R. 12583 before the Subcommittee on Government Activities and Transportation of the Committee on Government Operations. A copy of that testimony is attached for your information.

The Office of Management and Budget has advised that from the standpoint of the Administration's program, there is no objection to the submission of this report to your Committee.

Sincerely,

Jay Solomon

Jay Solomon
Administrator

Enclosure

THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20540

LEGISLATIVE LIAISON OFFICE

MAY 18 1978

May 18, 1978

Dear Mr. Romney:

Enclosed is a statement supporting H.R. 12583, the Federal Information Centers bill. Please let us know if we can be of any further assistance to you.

Sincerely yours,

Adoreen M. McCormick

Adoreen M. McCormick
Legislative Liaison Officer

Mr. Miles Q. Romney
Counsel
Government Activities and
Transportation Subcommittee
Committee on Government Operations
U. S. House of Representatives
Washington, D. C. 20515

STATEMENT OF THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS ON H.R. 12583, FEDERAL INFORMATION CENTERS

The Library of Congress is happy to speak to H.R. 12583, a bill to authorize the permanent establishment of a system of Federal Information Centers.

The Library of Congress has long served as an information center for the American public, but requests made of it for information are by no means limited to information about the operation of the Federal Government. For the most part, information is requested from the materials in the Library's collections.

The Library of Congress serves as the "court of last resort" for information to the American public. During fiscal year 1976, the Library answered in writing over 575,000 requests for information from the public. Nearly 30,000 volumes were circulated out-of-town during this period on interlibrary loan. The Library of Congress provides information and books only after the requestor has exhausted local library resources.

A telephone inquiry unit is maintained by the Library to answer reference questions for Federal agencies and non-profit organizations. In addition, other units of the Library with particular expertise will answer telephone inquiries for information not available in local libraries. During fiscal 1976, over 390,000 telephone inquiries were received. It is not known how many of these telephone calls were received from Federal Information Centers, but the staff estimates that the service is not heavily used by the Centers.

The Federal Information Centers have assisted the Copyright Office of the Library of Congress by providing application forms for copyright and other related publications to the public through their Centers. This has been particularly helpful during the past calendar year because the Copyright Revision Act, which became effective January 1, 1978, necessitated new forms and instructions. We would hope that the Centers would be able to continue to be of assistance to the Copyright Office.

In order to help the Centers in providing information to citizens, the Library would be happy to suggest bibliographies of important sources for information on the Federal Government, its operations, and its publications. One service that may be useful to the Centers is the Library's free National Referral Center. This Center is able to direct those who have questions to organizations that can provide the answers. The Center maintains up-to-date information on any organization, institution, group, or individual with specialized information and a willingness to share it with others.

Should H.R. 12583 become effective and the number of Federal Information Centers increase, we would be happy to cooperate with the General Services Administration in any way that would be appropriate.

As probably the oldest "information center" in the Federal Government, the Library of Congress favors legislation to create a nationwide network of Federal Information Centers.

national council of senior citizens, inc.
1511 K Street, N.W. • Washington, D.C. 20005 • Telephone: (Area Code 202) 347-8800

Acting President
James Carbray
Whittier, California

Executive Director and
Director of Information
William R. Hutton
Washington, D. C.

May 17, 1978

MAY 19 1978

The Honorable John Burton
Chairman, House Subcommittee on Government
Activities and Transportation
U.S. House of Representatives
Rayburn House Office Building, Room B-350
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Burton:

The National Council of Senior Citizens, a nonprofit nonpartisan organization representing over three and a half million senior citizens, welcomes this opportunity to endorse the Federal Information Centers and to recommend authorization of such through H.R. 12583.

Anyone who has ever tried to get information on even a simple question concerning government programs can appreciate the value of the Federal Information Centers. Our organization receives many questions from members of the senior community concerning federal programs especially in the areas of Medicare, Social Security and Food Stamps. The bureaucratic maze that many of these poor, often uneducated, people are forced to run can be overwhelming and often prevents a needy person from taking advantage of relief programs. This organization sometimes has difficulty in finding the correct answers also.

Central clearinghouses for information are clearly needed. The Federal Information Centers, established in 1966, are admirably suited for filling such a need. However, it cannot be emphasized enough that these centers will only be as effective as their personnel. High priority must continue to be given to selection of courteous informed individuals who really seek to help people, not just push papers.

H.R. 12583 calls for the permanent establishment of a system of Federal Information Centers which has heretofore existed only on a temporary basis. We heartily support such a move. The amount asked for such service--$7 million for fiscal year ending September 1980--is not high and the return, although incalculable in figures, will be enormous in terms of the well-being of our citizens.

Sincerely,

William R Hutton

William R. Hutton
Executive Director

WRH/Rbb7
OPEIU 2 (AFL-CIO)

First Vice President, James Carbray, Whittier, California • **Second Vice President**, Dr. Mary C. Mulvey, Providence, Rhode Island • **Third Vice President**, David Miller, Detroit, Michigan • **Fourth Vice President**, George J. Kourpias, Silver Spring, Maryland • **Secretary-Treasurer**, J. A. Rightley, Rochester, Michigan • **General Counsel**, Robert J. Mozer, New York, New York; James J. Kennedy, Jr., Washington, D. C.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

WASHINGTON OFFICE

AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

BOX 54 • 110 MARYLAND AVENUE N.E. • WASHINGTON D.C. 20002 • (202) 547-4440

July 21, 1978

The Honorable John L. Burton, Chairman
House Government Activities and
Transportation Subcommittee
Rayburn House Office Building - B-350
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Burton:

This letter is sent to convey the interest and concern of the American Library Association and its Government Documents Round Table regarding legislation authorizing the permanent establishment of a system of Federal Information Centers (HR 12583 and HR 12744).

The American Library Association is a nonprofit educational organization whose 35,000 members are dedicated to the improvement of library service and to increasing access of U.S. citizens to needed information. We are aware that your subcommittee has held hearings on the Federal Information Centers, and we commend your efforts to increase the ability of Americans to learn about those federal government activities and services which may be of benefit to them.

Another widespread system of information about the federal government exists--the federal depository libraries which make federal publications freely accessible to citizens. These libraries are staffed with information specialists knowledgeable about both federal government publications and services, and many of them provide well-organized information and referral services to government agencies at all levels. We are concerned that duplication of services between the two systems be avoided, and that the fullest possible cooperation be encouraged.

The chair of ALA's Government Documents Round Table, Francis Buckley, had attempted to contact Mr. Miles Romney of the subcommittee staff. We understand he is out of town until July 25, but I hope that a discussion of this subject between ALA representatives and Mr. Romney can be arranged soon after that date. If I can provide any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Eileen D. Cooke

Eileen D. Cooke
Director
ALA Washington Office

EDC:er
cc: Miles Romney
Francis Buckley

General
Services
Administration Washington, DC 20405

August 4, 1978

Honorable John L. Burton
Chairman, Subcommittee on
Governmental Activities and
Transportation
Committee on Government
Operations
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear ~~Mr. Burton~~ John:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the relationship between the Federal Information Center (FIC) Program and the American Library Association (ALA) and Federal Depository Libraries. Mr. Miles Q. Romney verbally requested our comments and, at the same time, furnished us a copy of a July 21, 1978, letter from Ms. Eileen D. Cooke, Director of the Washington Office of the ALA.

We feel that these two valuable resources, Federal Depository Libraries and Federal Information Centers, provide complementary services rather than competitive or duplicative services. By making federal publications freely accessible to the public through their network of over 1,000 designated depositories, Federal Depository Libraries enable the people to read and use documents which might otherwise be unavailable or difficult to obtain.

Some of the inquiries directed to the Federal Information Centers can be answered by government publications. We have felt fortunate over the years to be able to refer those inquirers to a Depository Library for the appropriate publications.

Frequently, however, FIC inquiries concern service delivery systems of Executive Departments and Agencies. More specifically, inquirers address questions regarding breakdowns in service delivery, inaccessibility of information about benefits and entitlements, and misunderstandings about the scope of jurisdiction or information resources possessed by agencies in the Executive Branch. Those kinds of inquiries often involve personal case histories and cannot generally be answered or explained by publications. Our FICs report that when these more nebulous or personal kinds of inquiries are directed to Federal Depository and other libraries, the libraries refer such inquiries to Federal Information Centers.

We are confident duplication of effort, where it exists at all, is minimal. We look forward to continuing together to provide a complete range of services from library services through personal problem-solving assistance. The FIC Coordinator has been in contact with representatives of the ALA and the Government Documents Round Table. They have discussed perceived duplication of services and will meet later this month to pursue the discussions further.

In addition, we look forward to seeking ways to further increase cooperation and coordination between our two information systems.

Sincerely,

GSA General
Services
Administration Washington, DC 20405

Honorable John L. Burton
Chairman, Subcommittee on
Government Activities and
Transportation
Committee on Government
Operations
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Burton:

This is in response to your letter of May 26, 1978, inquiring about the decrease in the number of inquiries addressed to Federal Information Centers.

No one factor fully accounts for volume decreases in a single Center or for the program as a whole. Rather, several factors combined in most cases to cause lower inquiry volume, and some of these factors have a more severe effect than others.

FICs were originally situated in center-lobby locations for maximum exposure to visitors to Federal facilities. Visitors often bypassed printed building directories in favor of dropping by the FICs to seek routine building directory and locator information. Responding to these inquiries diverted a great deal of the FIC staffs' time and effort; and it frequently caused delays in performing the job they were established to do - respond to the substantive needs of people who require help to deal with the myriad programs, procedures and information resources of the government.

In an effort to redirect FIC efforts, all Regional Administrators were directed a year ago to move FICs out of center-lobbies to accessible off-lobby locations. During the past year, six Centers have been moved off lobby. Decreases in the volume of inquiries in those six Centers account for approximately one-third of the overall decrease. Four additional Centers are scheduled to move as soon as suitable office space can be located. We consider this a positive step toward assuring the best utilization of FIC resources. We also believe these FIC moves will partially reduce the projection of ten percent growth contained in the GSA's Annual Report to the Congress for 1977.

The Annual Report and that projection were developed during the first month of the new fiscal year when FIC inquiry volume was, indeed, still on the upswing. During the following months the FIC moves began to be felt in the form of lower volume.

Other factors have also affected inquiry volume. Because many FICs already attract larger numbers of inquries than they can handle at current staffing levels, we have not conducted a new public service advertising campaign for two years. The 1975-76 campaign generated a 15 percent increase in inquiries and those radio and television spots are still being used but to a lesser extent. We are confident that they are still bringing in additional inquiries but not at the original level.

There are other factors which are unique to certain Centers and contribute to a decrease in volume. The special telephone listings for the FIC were inadvertently omitted from the Albuquerque, New Mexico commercial telephone directory and the volume is down by 15,000 inquiries. Several Centers experienced significant turnover in personnel; and the reduced staffing level and subsequent inexperienced personnel meant that a lower volume of inquiries could be handled.

Please call upon me if I can provide any further information

Sincerely

Jay Solomon

Jay Solomon
Administrator